

**AL RIHLA AND CURRICULUM THEORY: A QUALITATIVE
COMPARATIVE STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY AND HISTORICAL MUSLIM
TRAVELERS IN SEARCH OF KNOWLEDGE**

A Dissertation

by

METHAL R. MOHAMMED

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 2011

Major Subject: Curriculum and Instruction

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ABSTRACT

Al-Rihla and Curriculum Theory: A Qualitative Comparative Study of Contemporary
and Historical Muslim Travelers in Search of Knowledge. (May 2011)

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The purpose of this interdisciplinary study was to explore the experiences of al-rihla of International Muslim Graduate Students and to compare them to those of the Medieval Muslim Travelers. This qualitative study expands on the sparse existing literature by providing a new perspective for International Muslim Graduate Students' experiences of al-rihla and their role as cultural agents through an autoethnographic account and in-depth interviews with international Muslim graduate students. The study also makes a comparison of al-rihla in search of knowledge between International Muslim Graduate Students and Medieval Muslim Travelers.

The naturalistic paradigm of inquiry was used in this study to acquire and analyze data. The data were collected from three resources: the auto-ethnographic account of the researcher, in-depth interviews with seven international Muslim graduate students, and the al-rihla accounts of three Medieval Muslim Travelers.

Data analysis showed that educational experiences of Muslim travelers, over time, have been strongly influenced by three major factors: 1) religious beliefs about

knowledge and the search for knowledge, 2) culture and cultural identity, and 3) issues of political power and positionality.

Discussions of the al-rihla of international Muslim graduate students include the role of institutions of higher education as places and spaces for public pedagogy that can eliminate cultural differences and bridge cultural gaps by raising awareness of Islam as a culture and the empowerment of international Muslim graduate students as cultural agents of peace.

DEDICATION

In the Name of Allah

The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

“Read! In the Name of your Lord Who has created (all that exists). He has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood). Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. He has taught man that which he knew not.” (Qur’an 30: 96)

To the memory of my late father, may Allah have mercy on his soul, and mother who cultivated an everlasting love of knowledge and the search for it into my heart and soul. It is because of this passion to learn that I was able to embark on an al-rihla toward my doctoral degree. To the memory of my late father from whom I learned steadfastness and courage and to my mother from whom I learned what it means to become a mother, I dedicate this work and my doctoral degree.

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I offer my sincere gratitude to my advisor and doctoral committee chair, Professor G. Patrick Slattery. Throughout my dissertation journey, Dr. Slattery stood beside me both encouraging and supporting my line of inquiry and guiding me through his knowledge and wisdom. I am eternally grateful for him for allowing me to bring this study to light. I am thankful for his professionalism, love of the field of education, and inspiration to delve into new waters in scholarly research.

I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Janet Hammer, Dr. Elsa Gonzalez, Dr. Patricia Larke, and Dr. Akel Ismail Kahera, for providing me their expertise, advice, and support.

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A special thanks to my Iraqi professors overseas at Baghdad University, Professor Raya Al-Naksahabandi, Professor Munthir Al-Abusi, and Professor Abdel wahid Muslat, for their continuous support during my al-rihla in pursuing my doctoral degree in the U.S.

My deepest thanks and gratitude go to my mother and dear sister, Amaal, in Baghdad, to my brothers Khayal and Jamaal, to my sons Ammar, Jan, Abdullah, and to my nephew Ahmed for their love, support, and belief in me.

Finally, a special thanks to my friends, Abir Hashim, Zainab Laith, Zaynab Sadik, Aweeza Dhahir, and Dhamia Dawood, for their friendship and support throughout this journey.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	iii
DEDICATION	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	x
 CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background of the Study.....	3
Statement of the Problem	8
Purpose of the Study	10
Research Questions	10
Theoretical Framework	11
Significance of the Study	14
Assumptions of the Study	15
Definition of Terms.....	15
Limitations of the Study	20
II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	23
Traveling and the Journey Theme	23
Theory	25
Knowledge in Islam	51
Medieval Muslim Society	54
Medieval Muslim Travelers	62
Empirical Research	73
Discussion and Gaps in the Literature.....	82
III METHODOLOGY	84
Naturalistic Paradigm.....	84
Research Design	88
Data Collection.....	95
Data Analysis	104
Ensuring Trustworthiness.....	109

CHAPTER	Page
Working Hypotheses	113
IV DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS	115
Data Presentation and Findings	115
Autoethnographic Data Presentation	116
Discussion	126
Interview Data Presentation	128
Medieval Muslim Travelers Data Presentation	149
IMGS' and MMT' Al-rihla Comparison	188
Discussion	194
General Discussion	203
V SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	206
Summary	206
Discussion	209
Additional Conclusions	222
Implications	224
Recommendation for Future Studies	228
REFERENCES	230
APPENDIX A	246
APPENDIX B	248
APPENDIX C	251
APPENDIX D	254
VITA	256

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		Page
1	University International Student Enrollment.....	89
2	Generated Categories of the Interview Study.....	129

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

*All good people agree
And all good people say,
All nice people like Us, are We
And every one else is They:
But if you cross over the sea
Instead of over the way,
You may end up (think of it) looking at We
As a sort of They!*

(Rudyard Kipling as cited in Shaheen, 1997)

The inspiration for this study comes from my experience as a Muslim traveler in search of knowledge in the United States. My journey in pursuing a graduate degree(s) in the U.S. inspired me to investigate not only myself and my experiences as a cultural agent but also other Muslim travelers' experiences. This research transcends place, space, and time, beginning with accounts from centuries ago of Medieval Muslim travelers (MMT), who were cultural agents of their times. I started my journey with simple questions about why people travel and ended it with more complicated questions about the impact that International Muslim Graduate Students (IMGS), as travelers, may have on world conflicts; such as that of U.S.-Western societies with the Islamic World, and whether journeys undertaken in the search for knowledge may be utilized to solve global problems.

For millennia, humans have been fascinated by travel. The ancient mythical tale

This dissertation follows the style of *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*.

of Gilgamesh (2700 BC), Semi God and king of the land of Mesopotamia, tells the story of his journey in search of the magic plant of immortality. Other myths depict the daily journey of the Sun God through the sky, in ancient Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean, as being a voyage from the beginning to the end of life while Homer recounts Odysseus' cosmic at the edges of the earth.

From these mythical journeys, we now turn to historical travels and adventures such as those taking place along the Silk Road. The accounts of the first journey by King Mu (Mu Wang) (-959 BC) on the Silk Road were written in the 5th-4th century BC, followed by Marco Polo (1254-1324 AD), who became the most famous western traveler to pass on the Silk Road. Other types of journeys included those of Medieval Muslim travelers, such as Ibn Jubayr (1145-1217) and Ibn Battuta (1304-1368), on their pilgrimages to Mecca, and young English elites travelling around Europe, in the 17th and 18th centuries, to expand their knowledge of its languages, architecture, geography, and to learn more about its culture; a journey popularly known as the Grand Tour.

In Medieval Islamic society, some Muslim travelers left rich accounts of their journeys into and out of the Islamic World, on their way to conducting hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca. By doing so, in fact, a new genre in Arabic literature was established and known as *adab al-rihla*, or *Travel Accounts*. Two of the most famous travel accounts in this era in Islamic civilization were those of Ibn-Battutu and Ibn Jubayr. This genre, with time, developed into the autoethnographic/biographic accounts of Muslim travelers around the world, whether for religious or secular reasons.

For Muslims, travel has a special significance in their lives, regardless of whether it is in concept or practice. Muslims believe that the journeys of the prophets (peace upon them, po them), as stated in the Quran, the Muslims' holy book, are significant not only for their physical movements but also for their spiritual revelations and moral lessons. Exemplary journeys include the journey of our father and Prophet Adam (puh) and our mother Eve (puh) from paradise to earth, Prophet Noah (puh) and his journey in the ark and the flood, Prophet Moses (puh) and his journey to the Holy Land and how the Lord spoke to him, Prophet Jesus (puh) and his travels from the city of Nazareth to Egypt and Jerusalem, and Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) and his physical journey from Mecca to Medina and his spiritual journey to the heavens of the *Isra' and Mi'raj*.

Islam encourages mobility, and Muslim travel may be classified into four different types: *hajj*, *hijra*, *Ziyara* and *rihla*. During hajj, or the pilgrimage to Mecca, travel is a religious obligation for Muslims who can afford it. Migration to other lands is known as hijra; the first hijra was that of the Prophet Mohammed and his followers from Mecca to Medina, in 622 AD, to escape the persecution of the unbelievers. Ziyara is the third form of travel in Islam and refers to visits to shrines. Finally, al-rihla is travel in search of knowledge that may be either religious or secular in nature.

Background of the Study

Culture and cultural identities, according to Huntington (1996), are civilization identities that are “shaping the patterns of cohesion, disintegration, and conflict in the post-Cold War world” (p. 20). Huntington divided the world into major civilizations,

amongst which are the Western and Muslim cultures, and ascribed the current global turmoil between the West and Islamic societies to cultural and religious clashes.

Huntington (1996) argued that culture may unify or divide nations. For example, the establishment of the European Union, though based on economic and political factors, was facilitated by the member states' similar cultural backgrounds and European ancestors. On the other hand, as some scholars argue, the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, and Czechoslovakia fell apart because their member states were comprised of people with different cultures (Huntington, 1996).

Civilization and culture, for Huntington (1996), both involved "values, norms, institutions, and modes of thinking" (p.41). Culture gradually builds a mental framework that defines individuals' and groups' ontology, shapes their behavior, and creates a framework to evaluate others' actions (Sussman, 2000). Furthermore, and according to Mirzoeff (1999), culture and cultural practices may expand to become a "realm where one engages with and elaborates a politics" (p. 24). Politics in this context does not refer to political practice, but rather to an individual or group identity.

To establish a more cohesive group identity, Huntington (1996) argued that Muslims reclaim "identity, meaning, stability, development, power, and hope" (p. 109) by adopting the concept of "Islam is the solution" as an ideology for the twenty-first century. Islam is a spiritual, mental, and social guide for Muslims in their daily life and practices; being a Muslim is not merely a matter of personal faith and practice, because, in addition to being a religion, Islam presents a framework for a bounded, blended, and interconnected social life and system. Muslims believe that Islam is a guide not only to

inter- and intra-personal relations but also in other basic areas of their lives. Islamic law covers seven basic areas in Muslims' daily life and practices: "worship, family matters, interpersonal relations, duties and responsibilities of the political governors and the governed, criminal justice and public order, international relations, character reformation and good manners" (Shakir, 2004, p. 4).

The origin of the clash between the West and Islamic civilization is not, in fact, a "civilization incompatibility," but rather, a geopolitical conflict, because "the oil and gas on which the awesome industrial and military might of the West depends is buried under the lands populated by the Muslims" (Hunter, 1998, p. 13). Therefore, the real causes of the Western-Islamic civilization clash are: power, determination over the use of natural resources, and economic reasons.

Between 2001 and 2007, the largest and most comprehensive World Poll of contemporary Muslims was launched by the Gallup Center for Muslim Studies (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007, p. xi). The study examined the opinions of 1.3 billion Muslims' on a wide variety of religious, social, and political issues — issues that have long been considered from a Western rather than a Muslim point of view. In the survey tens of thousands of face-to-face interviews were conducted in 35 nations where Muslims represent the majority or highest plurality of the population. The survey and interviews reflect the opinions of 90% of the Muslim population from around the world on contemporary global controversies about Islam. Prior to this study, opinions about Muslims were provided either by non-Muslims or by the minority of "politically radicalized" (p. 70) Muslims who represent only 7% of the Muslim population around

the world. In response to a question about what the West can do to improve relations with the Muslim world, suggestions included, “stop interfering, meddling in our internal affairs, colonizing, and controlling natural resources” (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007, p. 92). In a previous study conducted in 2007, WorldPublicOpinion.org surveyed residents in Morocco, Indonesia, Egypt, and Pakistan about U.S. policy in the Muslim world. Participants responded that the U.S.’s goal in the region is to “weaken and divide the Muslim world,” and the U.S. policy is a “political, economic, military, and cultural hegemony that threatens self-determination as well as Islamic identity” (Esposito & Mogahed, 2007, p. 88).

The Western and Islamic civilizations clashed again in 2003, during the second Gulf War. The second Gulf War was considered by some Arab and Islamic countries as a war against Islam, as Iraq is a Muslim country, but in fact, “the Iraqi regime was one of the most secular in the region” (as cited in O’Hagan, 1995, p. 23). Despite the conflict, new doors were opened for Iraqi students- Muslims, Christians, and Jews- to re-connect with the Western World after a 15-year boycott due to the previous regime’s political agenda. Accordingly, Iraqi students, intellectuals, educators, scientists, and other professionals have had new opportunities to develop their knowledge and communicate with other cultures. One of these opportunities is the Fulbright Cultural Exchange Program sponsored by the U.S. State Department.

In 2005, the researcher was selected as a Fulbright scholar for the Iraqi-U.S. Cultural Exchange Program to earn a master’s degree in education. My colleagues and I were proclaimed as being the Cultural Ambassadors of Iraq to American citizens (The

American Ambassador in Baghdad in May, 2005, personal communication) whose goal was to promote better relations between Iraq and the United States.

This research study is based on my personal experiences both during and after the time I was in the Fulbright Cultural Exchange Program in the U.S. I present my experiences here in an auto-ethnographic account in the form of three short stories; stories that helped me to better explore my “Self” and the “Other” as cultural agents. I then expanded the study to examine other International Muslim Graduate students’ (IMGS) experiences in the U.S. and to compare them with those of Medieval Muslim travelers.

According to Davis (2004), the number of international students from Arab and/or Muslim countries enrolled in study programs in the U.S. declined rapidly after 9/11, decreasing by 25% for students from Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, 16% for those from the United Arab Emirates, and 10% for those from Indonesia. At the graduate student level, IMGS in the U.S. represented 3.8% of all U.S. higher education students in 2004 (Davis, 2004), with a 76% decline in enrollment between 2001-02 and 2004-05 (Chow & Marcus, 2009). One factor to consider in evaluating these numbers is the recent establishment of American and Western sister universities in Arab Gulf countries: Texas A&M University in Qatar, Georgetown and American Universities in Dubai, American University in Abu Dhabi, and very recently, American and British Universities in the North of Iraq. These universities have encouraged great numbers of Arab Muslim students to study in their home countries; thus, this could be one factor accounting for the decrease in number of international students from Muslim countries

in the U.S. However, according to Chow and Marcus (2009), the average decline in the number of International Muslim students from predominantly Muslim countries studying in the U.S. was 15.5 percent over the period from 2001-02 to 2007-08. .

IMGS not only contribute to the economy of the U.S., as 46% of them are self-supporting (Chow & Marcus, 2009), but also add to U.S. intellectual advancements and enrich and diversify the typical student body in U.S. universities; IMGS contribute significantly to U.S. academic environments by enhancing higher education policies of embracing multiculturalism, thus improving the international/global educational experience. Accordingly, the presence of international graduate students, in general, and IMGS, in particular, is a vital, crucial, and significant factor for promoting better relations between the host community and the IMGS, on a micro-level, and the U.S. and the Muslim World, on a macro-level.

Drawing on both curriculum theory and curriculum studies in the Post-modern era, the researcher will address the themes of “Place and Spaces” and how they relate to this research study. This researcher argues that International Muslim Graduate Students are cultural agents of their countries and religion, in the U.S., and their al-rihla can be investigated, first, in relation to curriculum theory, and, then, perhaps, implemented into a curriculum to promote better relations between the U.S. and the Muslim World.

Statement of the Problem

After President Barak Obama’s historical visits to Cairo in 2009 and Turkey in 2010, it was expected that new doors would be opened between the Muslim World and American citizens in order to eliminate cultural gaps. One new, significant door being

opened is that institutions of higher education in the U.S. may serve as public spaces for educational purposes. In these arenas International Muslim Graduate Students (IMGS) and their American counterparts may be expected to work collaboratively and cooperatively to develop a better understanding between cultures.

It is estimated that IMGS represent 3.8% of all graduate students in the U.S. (Davis, 2004). However, no studies have been conducted to examine the role that IMGS can effectively play as cultural agents to bridge the cultural gaps between the Muslim World and the U.S. after 9/11. Since IMGS can be expected to spend from two to seven years enrolled in their graduate programs, they should be encouraged to address and unravel misunderstandings about Islam and Muslims on social, cultural, religious, and educational issues during their stay.

Therefore, in this study the researcher examined the IMGS' experiences of their al-rihla in comparison to Medieval Muslim Travel accounts, and considered using IMGS' experiences as a tool to promote a better understanding of the Other. This study also focused on the role of institutions of higher education in the U.S. in empowering their IMGS to reach out to the Other. Some strategies that have been proposed include initiating cultural programs led by IMGS in collaboration and cooperation with university departments/offices that address critical issues about Islam and Muslims. These suggested programs may be designed and implemented jointly and on a continuous basis in order to enhance better cultural relations on a global level.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate IMGS' al-rihla experiences in the U.S. and to compare them to Medieval Muslim Traveler accounts in order to promote a better understanding, respect for, and appreciation of the Other. The factors that influence IMGS' al-rihla in the U.S., along with elements and characteristics of their al-rihla will be identified. The objective of this study was to promote a better understanding between the Muslim World and the U.S. through a collaborative and cooperative endeavor between IMGS and their hosting communities in the U.S. during their graduate study programs. IMGS may serve as cultural agents in order to unravel misconceptions and misunderstandings about Islam and Muslims, and, at the same time, learn about their hosting community and U.S. culture.

Research Questions

1. How does the auto-ethnographic account of the researcher provide an understanding of al-rihla, Muslim travelers, and the experiences of International Muslim Graduate Students in a research southwestern U.S. university?
2. What do International Muslim Graduate Students at a research southwestern U.S. university report in interviews about al-rihla, their experiences in a U.S. university, and Muslim travel?
3. How do the analyses of the researcher's auto-ethnographic account and International Muslim Graduate Students' interviews compare and contrast with Medieval Muslim Travelers' experiences? How does this data analysis inform and explain educational spaces and experiences over time?

4. How do the data analyses of the researcher's auto-ethnographic account and interviews with International Muslim Graduate Students inform and advance curriculum theory, cultural studies, postcolonial theory, and Islamic studies?

Theoretical Framework

Two conceptual frameworks form the basis for this research study: the themes of place and of spaces. Both themes were investigated from four different perspectives in curriculum theory: postmodern, postcolonial, and cultural theories, and Islamic studies. However, poststructuralism was added as a separate section with the focus on Foucault's power/knowledge theory as it is associated with the theme of this study.

Postmodern Theory

For postmodernists, place is "one organizing idea for political, autobiographical, racial, and gender issues in curriculum" (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 2002, p. 289). A place is perceived through one's individual and/or collective perceptions, feelings, and emotions. Kincheloe and Pinar (1991) argued that a curriculum theory of place must possess a social theory and be founded on a social psychoanalytical theory of place: "a curriculum theory must possess a particularistic social theory, a grounded view of the world in which education takes place. Without such a perspective, curriculum theory operates in isolation" (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991, p. 5).

For Slattery (2006), place was a curriculum for ecological sustainability, environmental protection, cultural, political, and educational action. Slattery added that "educators must orchestrate environments where the interconnectedness of subject matter, human personas, and the natural environment is constantly and consciously

foregrounded. Without such awareness students will not take the next step of ethical action for ecological sustainability” (p. 205).

Place in autobiographical theory is a curriculum to interpret, conceptualize, and reconceptualize personal experiences. Curriculum, for Pinar, is an inner journey: “Mind in its place, I conceptualize the present situation. I am placed together. Synthesis” (Pinar, as quoted in Pinar, 2004, p. 37).

Postcolonial Perspective

In the post-colonialist perspective, place is a “palimpsest of a process in language; the naming by which imperial discourse brings the colonized space into being” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2007, p. 158). For Said (1978), Orientalism was associated with a place, as the Orient is viewed not only as a geographical but also as a, “cultural, political, demographic, sociological, and historical entity” (p. 221).

Cultural Perspective

In cultural studies, Homi Bhabha (1994) discussed physical and imaginary boundaries as cultural differences and argued that “the boundary becomes the place from which something begins its presencing” (p. 7). To Bhabha the homeland is a physical and imaginary location, a homeland is an imagi-nation, it is to “imagine something very solid that will ground and guarantee your identity” (Huddart, 2006, p. 70).

Islamic Perspective

In Islamic studies, Islam as a religion and social practice is understood to encourage Muslims’ mobility through four different forms of travel; hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca), hijra (migration), ziyarat (visits to the shrines), and al-rihla (travel in the search

of knowledge, either religious or secular). The theme of place in these four forms of travel is meant to encourage Muslims to travel regardless of whether they are in Islamic or other lands and whether for religious or secular knowledge. Some of these journeys may combine two or more forms of travel, such as in the case of Medieval Muslim travelers who combined hajj and rihla in their journeys (Eickelman & Piscatori, 1990). The primary purpose of travel in Islam is to satisfy religious obligations, to meet and communicate with people from other cultures, to contemplate God's creation, and to learn, expand, and exchange knowledge with other people, "O Mankind! We have created you from a single pair, a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes in order that you come to know one another [not that you may despise one another] (Qur'an 49:13).

The second conceptual framework is the theme of space. For postmodernist Miller, "space" meant the development of new educational research experiences by empowering teachers from a wide range of educational experiences and positions in a reciprocal and collaborative process, and the creation of a space for these collaborative voices to "build new positionalities for themselves among the controlling and authoritative systems and structures of their lives" (Miller, 1990, p. 141). Postmodernist Ellsworth (1997) discussed "space of difference" as a transitional space for change, and argued that "space of difference" is: 1) a social space shaped by "historical conjunctures of power and of social and cultural differences", 2) an unconscious space, and 3) a "powerful pedagogical resource for teachers" (p. 38). Finally, postmodernist Lisa Cary (2006) focused on the significance of epistemological understanding for researchers. She

argued that studying “curriculum as a discursively produced historically, socially, politically and economically inscribed epistemological space ... is an epistemological approach to study the knowing subject and researcher positionality” (p. xi).

From both the cultural and postcolonial perspectives, Homi Bhabha articulated space as an imaginary “zone” where cultures encounter one another. Cultures, for Bhabha (1994), meet in a third-space, an in-between, “unrepresentable liminal space that carries the burden of the meaning of culture” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 56) to “negotiate rather than negate” (p. 37) their differences. For Jungian analyst, Gambini (2003) culture and soul are inseparable, “soul and culture are two sides of the same coin” (p.xii). Gambini argued that contemporary education has become “soulless” as it fails to raise children’s enthusiasm and love of knowledge.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because IMGS constitute a relatively large percentage of graduate students in the U.S. And since IMGS spend 2-7 years in their graduate programs in the U.S., their role as cultural agents for their cultures and religion may promote better day-to-day communication and community interactions with Americans, both on and off-campus.

The existence of IMGS in the U.S. has gained significance, especially after President Barak Obama’s outreach to the Muslim World in his two historic visits to Cairo, in 2009, and Turkey, in 2010. Accordingly, the Obama administration has opened new doors to collaborative and cooperative endeavors with the Muslim World to: (1) improve Muslims’ image in the American consciousness, (2) reveal stereotypes and

misconceptions about Islam and Muslims, and (3) work together against terrorists and Islamic fundamentalists.

Assumptions of the Study

The study was conducted in a large research southwestern U.S. university that the researcher assumed to be majority white and Christian, and where IMGS are a minority. Recruitment of IMGS to participate in this study was assumed to be easy and smooth as the researcher herself is an IMGS and had good relationships with her fellow IMGS. The researcher assumed that being an insider would encourage IMGS to openly share their experiences about the Other with her.

Definition of Terms

Abbasids “is the second dynasty of the Islamic Empire that succeeded the Umayyads in 132/749” (Glasse, 2008, p. 3).

Adab “literally means courtesy, politeness, propriety, morals, and also literature” (Glasse, 2008, p. 25).

Al-rihla denotatively means travel, and connotatively means a journey to seek knowledge. Al-rihla is also a genre in Arabic literature (Euben, 2006, p. 13).

Arab/Arabs are “the Semitic people indigeneous to the Arabian peninsula. Nowadays it applies to all people who speak Arabic as a mother tongue, including Muslims and Christians, but not Druzes and Arabic-speaking Jews” (Glasse, 2008, p. 60).

Classical period in Islamic history refers to the period before 1922 AD.

Dar al-Islam (House of Islam) “are the territories in which Islam and the Islamic religious Law (the Shari’ah) prevail” (Glasse, 2008, p. 125).

Dar al-kufr (House of disbelief) “refers to non-Muslim lands” (Eickelman& Piscatori, 1990, p. 11).

Fatimids (297-567/909-1171) is the “Isma’ili dynasty which founded Cairo as its capital in 358/969, and which ruled an empire extending from Palastine to Tunisia” (Glasse, 2008, p. 153).

Fatwa “is a legal opinion or decision regarding religious doctrine, law, and/or practice made by a recognized authority widely knowledgable Muslim scholar often called Mufti” (Glasse, 2008, p. 156).

Fiqh “means jurisprudence” (Glasse, 2008, p. 157).

Hadith “literally means “speech”, “report”, “account” ” and refers to the tradition relating to the deeds and utterances of the Prophet Mohammed recounted by his companions” (Glasse, 2008, p. 177).

Ijtihad “literally means “effort” and is applied to those questions which are not covered by the Qur’an or Sunnah, nor by direct analogy from known laws” (Glasse, 2008, p. 238).

International Muslim Graduate Students (IMGS) are Muslim graduate students who had been enrolled in their study programs at a southwestern university for 1-4 years at the time of conducting this study. IMGS’ experiences refer to these students’ experiences of al-rihla inside and/or outside of the U.S.

Hajj is the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca as one of the five pillars of Islam.

Hanafi “is one of the four Schools of law in Islam which is dominant in most countries that were formerly part of the Turkish Empire and in India” (Glasse, 2008, p. 465).

Hanbali “is one of the four Schools of law in Islam and only observed in Saudi Arabia and in Qatar” (Glasse, 2008, p. 465).

Hijra “is the migration of Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622 A.D. to escape persecution at the hands of the Meccan Quraish tribesmen” (Glasse, 2008, p. 204).

Hijab is the Muslim woman’s dress of modesty. Nowadays, it refers to the headscarf Muslim women wear.

Hosting community for the purpose of this study is defined as the American community where IMGS live while enrolled in their study programs in the U.S.

Ijma’ “literally means “assembly” and is one of the Usul al-Fiqh, or principles of Islamic law” (Glasse, 2008, p. 238).

‘Ilm literally means “science” and/or “knowledge” (Glasse, 2008, p. 240).

Jihad “literally means “a struggle,” “a striving,” or “a great effort”. As a religious term there is “the greater jihad” which means the struggle of the soul to overcome the sinful obstacles that keep a person from God, and “the lesser jihad” which means any exertion — military of otherwise — against oppression and tyranny” (Aslan, 2005, p. 81).

Ka’bah “literally means cube, and refers to the large cubic stone structure, covered with a black cloth, which stands in the center of the Grand Mosque of Mecca. Muslims orient themselves in prayer towards the Ka’bah as a spiritual center. It is also referred to as the “holy house” (Glasse, 2008, p. 276).

Maghrib is a region of northwest Africa comprising the coastland and the Atlas Mountains of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia.

Maliki “is one of the four Schools of Law in Islam” (Glasse, 2008, p. 265).

Ma’rifa/Ma’rifah literally means “knowledge”.

Medieval Muslim travelers (MMT) are Muslim scholars who lived in the 11th -13th centuries in the Muslim World and traveled to Mecca to conduct hajj, but kept significant and detailed accounts of their travels as cultural records. These accounts are not only significant as Islamic travel accounts but also for the Western world.

Modern age in Islamic history refers to the period after the end of the Ottoman Empire, beginning in 1922 AD.

Mujtahid “literally means “one who strives” and refers to an authority that makes original decisions of canon law, rather than applying precedents already established” (Glasse, 2008, p. 377).

Muslims are adherents of the Islamic religion

Muslim World is defined as the global extent of Muslims, regardless of their nationality, for the purpose of this study. In Medieval Muslim society, the period of the 11th-13th centuries AD is referred to as the Islamic Empire.

Peace upon him/them (puh/them) is an expression that follows after naming any prophet other than Muhammad, or one of the archangels, i.e., Jibreel, Mikaeel, etc.

Peace and blessings upon him (pbuh) is an expression that follows after naming Prophet Mohammed which means peace and blessings from God upon him.

Qiyas “literally means “measure”, “scale” or “exemplar” and hence “analogy” and it is the principle by which the laws of the Qur’an and Sunnah are applied to situations not explicitly covered by these two sources of religious legislation” (Glasse, 2008, p. 427).

Qur'an is the Muslims' holy book; they believe it was revealed by God to his Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) through the angel Gabriel, from 610 to 632 CE" (Glasse, 2008, p. 518).

Rafidis "literally means repudiators." It is a "general name given by Sunnis to Shi'ites because they repudiate the validity of the Caliphs who preceded [Imam] Ali" (Glasse, 2008, p.431).

Shafi'i "refers to the school of Shafi'i in Islamic law which promoted the Hadith and Sunnah of the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh)" (Glasse, 2008, p. 265).

Shi'at "literally means "factions/fractions", "party" and is derived from Shi'at Ali, "the party of Ali", the Prophet's cousin" (Glasse, 2008, p. 483).

Southeast Asia refers to the geographic region south of China, east of India, and north of Australia. Malaysia and Indonesia lie within this area.

Suffis "is the plural form of Sufi which refers to Sufism the mysticism or esoterism of Islam" (Glasse, 2008, p. 498).

Sunna/Sunnah "literally means "custom", "wont", "usage" and it refers to applying the spoken and acted example of the Prophet. It includes what he approved, allowed, or condoned, and his actions and decisions or practices and what he himself refrained from and disapproved of" (Glasse, 2008, p. 504).

Talab al-'ilm refers to seeking knowledge.

Talib literally means "asker", "a seeker".

Talib al-'ilm means "a seeker of knowledge".

Ta'lim means "teaching".

Talquin “verbally means “to instruct,” “inspire”, “instruct”. It refers to spiritual teaching or instruction, and the suborning of witnesses (a term used in Islamic law, shari’ah)” (Glasse, 2008, p. 513).

Tawhid “means “to make one” or “to declare or acknowledge oneness”. It refers to acknowledging the Unity of God as the indivisible, Absolute, and the sole Real.” (Glasse, 2008, p. 518).

Ulama’ is the plural form of ‘alim which means a learned person.

Umayyad “is the first dynasty of Islam which began with the reign of Mu’awiyah in 41/661 and ended with the Marwan II in 132/750. It was established in Damascus” (Glasse, 2008, p. 537).

Umma/Ummah “refers to a people, a community, or a nation, in particular the “nation” of Islam which transcends ethnic or political definitions of the Western-style nationalism” (Glasse, 2008, p. 539).

Usul al-Fiqh “literally means “roots of jurisprudence” and is the basis of Islamic law” (Glasse, 2008, p. 541).

Watan refers to one’s homeland.

Zakah/Zakat refers to “giving up of a portion of the wealth one may possess” (Glasse, 2008, p. 565) to the poor and needy Muslims.

Ziarat/Ziyarah “is a visit to the tomb of the Saints or Shi’ite Imams” (Glasse, 2008, p. 570).

Limitations of the Study

Some limitations of this study include:

1. The study was not meant to be generalizable because it was based on a small number of a purposeful sample that was limited to one southwestern university in a small city.
2. As this was a naturalistic study, the researcher was the primary instrument in data collection who “builds upon his/her tacit knowledge” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 187). Thus, my experiences and viewpoints had an effect on the data analysis. I made use of peer debriefing and other strategies to ensure trustworthiness of this study.
3. The different political relationships between the U.S. and each IMGS participant’s country in comparison to the researcher being from Iraq, might have affected participants’ responses, “ drawing from contemporary perspectives on insider/outsider status ... not only will the researcher experience moments of being both insider and outsider, but that these positions are relative to the cultural values and norms of both the researcher and the participants” (Merriam, Johnson-Bailey, Lee, Kee, Ntseane, & Muhammad, 2001, p. 415-416).
4. Muslim males’ experiences varied greatly from those of females, especially because the four female participants were covered with a hijab which affected their experiences greatly in both their appearance and ways of communicating and interacting with their host community, with both males and females.

5. In addition the study was delimited to studying the experiences of those IMGS from the Middle-East, Central Asia, North Africa, Southeast Asia and Oceania pursuing their master's or doctoral degrees in the U.S.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature as it relates to this research investigating IMGS al-rihla in a research university in the southwestern U.S.; it is divided into five sections. The first section reviews the traveling and journey theme, the second discusses the concepts of place, space and positionality in curriculum theory as they relate to the journey theme, the third section reviews empirical research of direct relevance to IMGS/IMS al-rihla in seeking knowledge, the fourth discusses the concept of knowledge in Islam, and finally, the last section reviews Medieval Muslim society and the lives, works and philosophies of three Medieval Muslim travelers selected for this research study.

Traveling and the Journey Theme

The one who saw all I will declare to the world,
 The one who knew all I will tell about
 [line missing]
 He saw the great Mystery, he knew the Hidden:
 He recovered the knowledge of all the times before the Flood.
 He journeyed beyond the distant, he journeyed beyond exhaustion,
 And then carved his story on stone. [stone tablets]
 (The Epic of Gilgamesh, 2700 BC, Tablet 1)

In an increasingly globalized and multicultural world, “travel seems to have become the image of the age” (Euben, 2006, p. 1). Travel and journeying in both physical and spiritual forms signify a process toward self-discovery. Euben (2006) argued that, “travel signals both a metaphor for and a practice of journeying ... to the other shore, to worlds less familiar, and in terms of which a traveler may come to understand his or her own more deeply and fully” (p. 10).

Though the motivations and consequences of travel vary, the experience reflects a “complex and mercurial interaction of the personal, political, historical, and institutional” (Euben, 2006, p. 13). It is through the journey that one encounters the Other, and, thus, utilizes the experience to promote one’s development, growth, and enlightenment. In *Experience and Education*, Dewey (1938) asserted that experience is the foundation of any educational practice and is a “moving force” toward developing intellectual and moral growth,

... all experience is an arch wherethro
Gleams that unraveled world, those margin fades
For ever and for every when I move
(as cited in Dewey, 1938, p. 35)

In analyzing the journey theme, Martin Day (1974) discussed three essential aspects of it. The first is that journeying is the main theme of life. Life, itself, is a journey or voyage, as we travel from birth to death. The second is the “propulsion into the journey from external or internal forces,” and the third aspect, according to Day, is “pushing off from the quotidian into the strange and different” with curiosity for the unknown (Day, 1974, p. 41).

Travelers, from both the East and West, have left rich records of their historical, geographical, and cultural travel experiences. However, Day (1974) argued that the travel literature has been evaluated unfairly, in that, “travel literature seems clearly to rate below biography and ... below scientific essays” (p. 38). In his analysis of travel literature, Day identified three categories: “1) literature of fantasy purporting to be fact, 2) literature of fact, and 3) literature as material for art” (Day, 1974, p. 38).

Travel and journeying have been explored in two forms; physical, as movement and displacement, and spiritual, as an inner journey into one's Self. It is through these real and/or imaginary "places and spaces" that the journey has gained its reputation on the individual and/or collective historical, political, cultural, and educational level as a unique experience that generates new knowledge.

Theory

In this section, the researcher reviews the themes of place, space, and positionality in curriculum studies as they relate to the journey theme of this study. The review examined the three themes from four perspectives: postmodern theory, postcolonial theory, cultural studies, and Islamic studies. However, Post-structuralism will be discussed as a separate entity at the end of this section with special focus on Foucault's power/knowledge theory as it is strongly associated with the theme of this study.

Postmodern Theory

The connection of humans to place is significant. A place is more than a physical object, a location, or a piece of land. A place is a symbol to "humans' subjective experiences" (Bott, Cantrill, & Myers, 2003, p. 100) of their present, past, and future existence. A place is perceived through individual and/or collective perceptions, feelings, and emotions, "where the setting's physical and cultural characteristics meld with the individual's affective perceptions and functional needs" (Bott, as cited in Bott et al., 2003, p. 101). Feelings are infused and bound to places, thus, creating particularity. A place "is that which brings the particularistic into focus; a sense of place sharpens our

understanding of the individual and the psychic and social forces that direct him or her” (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991, p. 4). Places speak. They have something to say, and human beings must listen (Gruenewald, 2003).

Historical and cultural aspects are significant elements that emerge from and within a particular place. Pinar (2004) argued that a curriculum situated in place “not only represents place, it also becomes place” (p. 94). In a curriculum of place, Slattery and Edgerton (2009) asserted that attention to place must be associated with attention to “race, gender, sexuality, poverty, religion, culture, music, and the arts”. For Slattery (2006), place is a curriculum for ecological sustainability, environmental protection, cultural, political, and educational action (p. 205). Slattery noted that “educators must orchestrate environments where the interconnectedness of subject matter, human personas, and the natural environment is constantly and consciously foregrounded. Without such awareness, students will not take the next step of ethical action for ecological sustainability” (p. 205).

Kincheloe and Pinar (1991) argued that feelings that are deeply connected to place are essential in curriculum theory’s study of place (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991). The concept of place has been missing in the curriculum literature for a long time, as the field has been moving more toward the formulation of generalized principles in curriculum development that apply anytime and anywhere (as quoted by Pinar, in Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991). However, in an increasingly globalized world, mobility and geographical displacement have become the norm. In curriculum theory’s study of place, Kincheloe and Pinar argued that, “the relationship between place and feelings is central” (p. 4).

They noted that a curriculum theory of place must possess a social theory and be founded on a social psychoanalytical theory of place. “[A] curriculum theory must possess a particularistic social theory, a grounded view of the world in which education takes place. Without such a perspective, curriculum theory operates in isolation” (p. 5).

Pinar formulated *currere*, or ‘run the course’. The four moments in the *currere* are: the regressive, progressive, analytical, and synthetical, used to understand one’s presence in a “historical time and cultural place” (Pinar et al., 2002, p. 36). Curriculum, for Pinar, is an inner journey, “mind in its place, I conceptualize the present situation. I am placed together. Synthesis” (Pinar, as quoted in Pinar, 2004, p. 37).

In contemporary curriculum discourses, Kincheloe and Pinar argued that “the political, the autobiographical, the phenomenological, and the gender-focused-can be linked in a curriculum theory of place” (as cited in Pinar et al., 2002, p. 290).

For Slattery (2006), the concept of places of education is symbolic, and learning must be a free process of a free mind rather than one “confined, restricted, and polluted by those who seek to conquer the mind and spirit” (p. 202). Slattery brought the metaphor of the Mississippi River to education and argued that teachers and students in the postmodern era “must be free to meander, flood, shift course, and build a new delta” (p. 203); thus, bringing a new vision to teaching, learning, and education in a postmodern world.

Place, in place-based education is a comprehensive curriculum and pedagogy that encompasses the “history, folk culture, social problems, economics, and aesthetics of the community and its environment” (Sobel, 2004, p. 9). Such a curriculum “connects place

with self and community” (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 7), so place may not only be perceived as a geographical location but a *place* where “a person acquires a sense of belonging and purpose in that place, which gives meaning to life” (as cited in Bott et al., 2003, p. 106). The connection between place and feeling is essential in curriculum theory’s study of place (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991), as body and environment blend together with place (Escobar, 2001, p. 143).

Place in autobiographic theory is a curriculum to interpret, conceptualize, and reconceptualize personal experiences. Place, in autobiographical curriculum theory, is interconnected with our experiences. “I want to understand the role of place in my experience ... place signifies the diverse and intersecting worlds in which I dwell, to which I contribute meaning, and from which I take the measure of my being” (Casemore, 2008, p. 1). Casemore (2008) argued that place is a space of connection between the “object world and my [his] internal landscape” (p. 1).

Casemore (2008) further envisioned “place” as a text “that demands to be read as a cultural practice rather than a literary place or a physical landscape. In order to bring new insights into analyzing the concept of “place,” Casemore raised questions, such as “what does a particular discourse of place accomplish? What codes and norms does it establish? What identities, perspectives, and ways of knowing does it include and exclude? And what does it defend and abject?” (p. 2); bringing new insights into analyzing the concept of “place.”

Individuals' experiences of place have the power to connect and swing subjectivity when memories, emotions, and images are consciously recalled as amalgamated fragments (Casemore, 2008, p. 24).

Space and Positionality

From a feminist perspective, Janet Miller “struggled to create spaces with reconceptualized versions of curriculum theorizing ... to explore the personal and the political not as a binary but rather as reciprocal, interactive, constantly changing and reconstructing influence on ... teachers' conceptions of curriculum, pedagogy, and research” (Pinar, as quoted in Miller, 2005, p. x). For Miller, “space” meant to create new educational research experiences by empowering teachers from a wide range of educational experiences and positions in a reciprocal and collaborative process (Miller, 1990, p. 130). She argued that this struggle not only initiated a space for these collaborative voices but also allowed them to build new positionalities for themselves, “among the controlling and authoritative systems and structures of their lives” (p. 141).

In her discussion of teacher's positionality, Miller (1990) asserted that it is through teachers' and students' collaborative work that a particular space of positionality could be created, and that the “authoritative systems and structures that guide” (p. 141) the lives of educators could be “actively utilized ... as a location for the construction of meaning ... rather than as a locus of an already determined set of values” (as cited in Miller, 1990, p. 141). Miller (1990) brought the postmodernist argument of the “constantly changing nature of individuals' possibilities” (p. 2) into educational experiences and showed how individuals are shaped by the different dimensions of their

experiences. Miller asserted that concepts such as neutrality, objectivity, and transparent description have been subjected to “positivist ways of knowing” (p. 2). She emphasized that such “positivist orientations” reflect the closing rather than the opening of spaces where the latter would help create spaces between one’s self and “what enveloped and surrounded” it (p. 3).

With her interest in using pedagogical models as a curriculum, Elizabeth Ellsworth (1997) discussed “space of difference” as transitional spaces for change. She argued that these volatile spaces occur between address and response, film and audience, and curriculum and students. She argued that “space of difference” is: 1) a social space shaped by “historical conjunctures of power and of social and cultural differences,” 2) an unconscious space, and 3) a “powerful pedagogical resource for teachers” (p. 38). In such a curriculum, Ellsworth, in fact, positions teachers as “producers of culture rather than re-producers” of it (Ellsworth, 1997). Miller suggested that a teacher’s positionality should be “actively utilized ... as a location for the construction of meaning ... rather than as a locus of an already determined set of values” (Miller, 1990, p. 141).

Ellsworth raised significant inquiries into power and social relationships in pedagogy, and how delicate and, sometimes, invisible they might be. She asserted that it is through the teachers’ address of their students that they can “make a difference in power, knowledge, and desire” (p. 8). Thus, it is through how and not what we teach that power and social positioning work. Such a pedagogical relationship is paradoxical and poses “problems and dilemmas” that can not be easily resolved (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 8). Ellsworth further emphasized J. Donal’s idea of opening a new space “between the

conscious and unconscious responses” (p. 41) between students and teachers, and noted that through psychoanalysis he introduced “the idea of another locality, another space, another scene, the between perception and consciousness” (as cited in Ellsworth, 1997, p. 41).

In her analysis of the student-text relationship, Ellsworth (1997) envisioned such a relationship as a two-way relationship that eliminates the space of difference between “the outside (the social, the curriculum) and the inside (the individual psyche, the student)” rather than as a one-way relationship, that of “determination between curriculum and student understanding” (p. 48). She emphasized that a two-way relationship between a student and text is that of a “dialogue” (p. 48). Dialogue in education for Ellsworth is capable of “constructing knowledge to resolving problems, to ensuring democracy, to securing understanding, to teaching, to alleviating racism or sexism, to arriving at ethical and moral claims, to enacting our humanity, to fostering community and connection” (p. 85)

Lisa Cary presented “curriculum spaces” as a research theory that combines curriculum and educational theory. Cary (2006) developed a curriculum theory that “centers knowing and spaces of knowing as a discursive production that shaped the educational experience” (p. 1). She focused on the significance of epistemological understanding for researchers, and argued that studying “curriculum as a discursively produced historically, socially, politically and economically inscribed epistemological space ... is an epistemological approach to study the knowing subject and researcher positionality” (p. xi). Cary added that “curriculum spaces” are “in-between” spaces and

“contact zones” where “classroom discussion, interruption and questioning exist within a social project framed by conditions of coercion, radical inequality and intractable conflict” (Cary, 2006, p. 108). The significance of Cary’s work, according to Jupp (2007) lies in her argument of “creating, preserving, and enacting curriculum spaces” in order to advance conversations (p. 10).

Edwards and Usher (2003) envisioned curriculum spaces as power spaces and “places that are the outcome of, and give expression to, the distribution and exercise of power” (p. 4). They further argued that, “power, through knowledge, brings forth active ‘subject’ who better ‘understand’ their own subjectivity yet who in this very process subject themselves to forms of power (as cited in Cary, 2006, p. 2)

Postcolonial Theory

Postcolonial theory became “part of the critical toolbox” in the 1970s, when many practitioners emerged, such as Edward Said, whose book *Orientalism* (1978) has been regarded as the theory’s founding work (Rajan, 1998).

The Orient as a phenomenon was established by writers, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators (Said, 1978), and has been shaped by European thinking for centuries now. Said (1978) argued that the Orient is a reflection of Europe’s manifestation of its superiority and military, political, and cultural power, “the Orient ... is also the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other” (p. 1).

The Orient was portrayed as a “dream, mystery, the opposite side of the inferior side of Western realities” (Beit-Hallahmi, 1980, p. 69). The relationship between the West and East, the Occident and the Orient is that of “power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony” (Ashcroft et al., 2007, p. 153). Orientalism is a Western construction of the Orient, the Other and a process

based on the Orient’s special place in European Western experience. The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilization and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. (Said, 1978, p. 1)

Place in the post-colonial subject’s experience is a “palimpsest of a process in language; the naming by which imperial discourse brings the colonized space into being” (Ashcroft et al, 2007, p. 158). Orientalism was processed into Western thinking as a way to represent the Orient through three entities: 1) academic and scholarly professions, 2) style of thought based on the distinction between you/us, East/West, and Orient/Occident, and 3) a corporate institution to deal with the Orient (Said, 1978). The three definitions “illustrate how Orientalism is a complex web of representations about the Orient” (Ashcroft & Ahluwalia, 1999, p.55). Said argued that

Orientals or Arabs thereafter shown to be gullible, devoid of energy and initiative ... intrigue, cunning, and unkindness to animals; Orients cannot walk on either a road or a pavement, Orients are inveterate liars ... lethargic and suspicious, and in everything oppose the clarity, directness, and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race” (p.39).

Leela Gandhi (1998) stated that concepts such as “diaspora” and “hybridity” are significant characteristics of postcolonialism that are generally associated with human displacement and cultural dislocation. Gandhi argued that the diaspora, though

sometimes used interchangeably with migration, is a “theoretical device” (p. 131) used for questioning ethnic identity. However, the concept of the diaspora becomes a less problematic term and practice when it “illustrates the necessary mobility of thought and consciousness produced by the cultural adhesions of colonialism” (p. 132). Gandhi added that “diasporic thought finds its apotheosis in the ambivalent, transitory, culturally contaminated and borderline figure of the exile, caught in a historical limbo between home and the world” (p.132). Diaspora thought and hybridity, according to Gandhi assists post-colonialism in “its search for evidence regarding the mutual transformation of colonizer and colonized” (p. 132).

Cultural Studies

Homi Bhabha, in *The Location of Culture* (1994), tried to find an appropriate location for the confrontation of two cultures in the postcolonial period. Cultures, according to Bhabha (1994), meet in a “third space,” a space “in-between,” “unrepresentable liminal space that carries the burden of the meaning of culture” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 56). Space, for Bhabha, is an imaginary “zone” where cultures encounter one another to “negotiate rather than negate” their differences. It is in this “third space” in the “interstitial passage between fixed identifications that opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference” (p. 5). The third space for Bhabha is the place, the location where cultures encounter, interact, and “negotiate rather than negate” their differences.

Hybridity, for Bhabha, is a philosophical concept that has come to mean all sorts of things regarding mixing and combining in the moment of cultural exchange. Bhabha

uses hybridity as a space of separation, where there is more than one culture but less than two; it is the location where cultures encounter one another and interactions and transformations may occur. In this in-between, interstitial space, the process of conceptualizing international culture based on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity may occur (Bhabha, 1994, p. 38). Hybridity refers to the formulation of "new transcultural forms" (Ashcroft & Griffiths, 2000) within a contact space produced by colonization; thus, hybridity is better conceived as a process, rather than a description, that offers a way to analyze the "hybrid, hyphenated, syncretic global diaspora" (Bhabha, 1994, p.55) world in which we live.

Giroux and McLaren (1994) believed that cultural differences in pedagogical practices are spaces that can be developed in order to enable students to represent through rewriting their "own histories differently" (p. 51). And, by doing so, critical educators allow a "counternarrative of emancipation in which new visions, spaces, desires and discourses can be developed" (p. 51). Giroux argued that ethnicity as a "representational politics" runs in opposition to the boundaries of "cultural containment and becomes a site of pedagogical struggle" thus a "representational pedagogy must be a pedagogy of place that is, it must address the specificities of experiences, problems, language, histories ... of students and communities" (pp. 51-52).

Islamic Studies

Travel in Islam

"O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other. Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (one who is) the

most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)” (Qur’an 49:13).

Islam, as a religion and social practice, encourages Muslims’ mobility through different forms of travel. One of these is hijra (migration), or travel from non-Muslim lands (*dar al-kufr*/non-Muslim territories) to Muslim lands (*dar al-Islam*/Muslim territories). Another form of travel is hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca, being one of the five pillars of Islam for Muslims who are able to afford it. A third form is *ziyarat*, or visits to shrines, and the fourth form is al-rihla, or travel in search of knowledge. Some Muslims’ journeys may combine two or more forms of travel; such as the Medieval Muslim travelers who combined hajj and al-rihla in their journeys. In *Muslim Travelers*, Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori argued that Muslim travel is a complex phenomenon that expands the boundaries of religious doctrines and ritual practices to become a “pervasive intricacy” (Eickelman & Piscatori, 1990, p. xii). In their work, Eickelman and Piscatori examined a variety of research studies that analyzed the four different forms of Muslim travel, hajj, hijra, al-rihla, and ziyarat, throughout Islamic history, in order to answer questions concerning the essence, motivation, and effect of those travels. These researchers believed that these studies show that Muslim travels are heavily influenced by the “religious imagination”, as represented in different forms of spiritual and temporal movement, rather than solely physical movement.

Islamic history has been divided into “sharply delineated periods that may encourage the assumption that there are dominant doctrines in any given time period” (Eickelman & Piscatori, 1990, p.11). Keeping this assumption in mind, the researcher reviewed and discussed three concepts of travel in Islam: al-rihla, hijra, and hajj in the

following section, and provided an analysis of how the meanings of these three terms have evolved during two historical periods of Islamic history: the modern (from the end of the Ottoman period, in 1922 AD) and the pre-modern (classical).

Al-rihla as a Term, Concept, and Theme

Al-rihla in Arabic means travel or journey. In classical Islamic history, al-rihla means travel in search of (religious) knowledge. Throughout Islamic history, the concept of al-rihla has evolved and come to mean the search for knowledge, either religious or secular in nature. Al-rihla also refers to a genre in Arabic literature, *adab al-rihla*, that deals with travel accounts as a literary material for study and investigation. This genre in Arabic literature originated in Medieval Muslim society, specifically as a result of Ibn Jubayr's and Ibn Battuta's travel accounts.

During the classical period of Islamic history *al-rihla*, *talab al 'ilm* signified travel in search of religious knowledge and spiritual matters that led to one of the "esteemed places of Islamic teaching, such as Hijaz/Medina, Cairo, or Fez" (El Moudden, 1990, p. 69). However, a scholar in Andalusia argued that "those who traveled were concerned with secularly and religious disciplines alike and far from being restricted to the search and study of Tradition ... the [*al-rihla*] was a many-sided intellectual endeavor" (as cited in Euben, 2006, p. 36). A religious al-rihla, such as the hajj, involves not only the physical movement between places but also encounters with other cultural and "political and social identities" (Euben, 2006, p. 36). Thus, al-rihla becomes a multi-sided journey towards several different ends.

In Islamic history, during the fourteenth century, the travels of Moroccan Muslim scholars of *Maghrib* became a phenomenon that characterized the Medieval Muslims' al-rihla in search of knowledge. Al-rihla thus "became of cliché of medieval Islamic intellectual life" (Netton, 1996, p. vii). Netton added that "there is no branch of Muslim intellectual life, religious and political, and the daily life of average Muslim that remained untouched by the all pervasive attitude towards 'knowledge' as something of supreme value for Muslim being" (as cited in Netton, 1996, p.vii). Thus, it became a trend to for Muslims to travel to the Islamic centers of knowledge in Cairo, Hijaz (Saudi Arabia), and Fez to gather with other Muslim scholars.

Al-rihla in Medieval Muslim society can be divided into three types: 1) al-rihla within Morocco as a regional journey, 2) al-rihla *hijaziyya* or travel to Hijaz for pilgrimage and religious study, and 3) al-rihla *sifariyya* which includes visits to embassies and missions to Muslim and non-Muslim lands (El Moudden, 1990, p. 70). The *hijaziyya* al-rihla, in particular, may be considered as a type of hajj. Not only was the *hijaziyya* al-rihla a religious journey but it was also a cultural and social experience, as pilgrims stopped for extended periods in cities and places, such as Cairo, to attend classes at al-Azhar University, for instance, on their way to Hijaz. El Moudden (1990) argued that both al-rihla *hijaziyya* and *sifariyya* had two elements in common: 1) to share experiences of al-rihla with "various components of *Umma*, and 2) understand differences through comparisons with others" (p. 70). However, some Muslim travelers devoted their al-rihlas to the search for religious knowledge, such as Al-Ayyashi (AH

1037/AD 1628) who traveled three times to Hijaz in 1649, 1653, 1661, to “actively learn and participate in theological debates” (El Moudden, 1990, p. 77).

In the nineteenth century, a critical shift in the concept of al-rihla occurred, changing from an adventure for travelers to a more in-depth perception of a “pedagogical process, to seek other places and nations knowledge which is useful at home” (Euben, 2006, p. 97). Travel in this sense, according to Euben (2006), becomes a bridge to learning about a different kind of “perception of place and space and distance engendered by an increasing awareness of regions and peoples separated by vast oceans and thousands of miles” (p.97). Euben (2006) ascribed this shift mainly to Tahtawi and Tocqueville, and their subsequent journeys to France and the U.S. For al-Tahtawi, it was the “French society, knowledge, and organization” that influenced his al-rihla, while for Tocqueville it was the American democracy that shaped his perception of al-rihla. Al-Tahtawi suggested that, “travel both serves and reinforces love of ones homeland because acquisition of new knowledge ... is essential not only to the greatness of the *watan* (one’s homeland) but also to inspiring loyalty to it” (Euben, 2006, p. 102). Tahtawi categorized his book about his travel to France as an al-rihla, and it may be considered to fit within the al-rihla genre in Arabic literature “as it encompasses history, geography, ethnography, and a story-telling component” (p. 115). Another significant al-rihla account of travel within the U.S., in the 1950s, was that of Sayyid Qutb, a prominent Muslim scholar. His al-rihla account was a religious, social, political, and personal exploration of American society, “American’s productivity is unmatched by

any other nation. It has miraculously elevated life to levels that cannot be believed” (as cited in Abdel-Malek, 2000, p.11).

In the 1980s, Najib Mahfuz’s *al-rihla* account of Ibn Fattuma was a lively example of the *al-rihla* genre in the twentieth century. Mahfuz’s novel is fictional and presents a journey to another culture in the form of comparisons and contrasts between different cultures/civilizations in a historical, rather than geographical, sense (El-Enany, 1993). The novel’s theme is universal and it raises questions, “about whether and when human society will be able to achieve the craved-for ideal,” and it criticizes the “modern” *Dar al-Islam* which is shown to be in need of “radical reform” (Netton, 1996, p. 166). There is no reference to time or place in Mahfuz’s imaginary novel, which was written to parody Ibn Battuta’s *al-rihla*, as the goal for the protagonist is to conduct hajj (Netton, 1991). It is a harsh criticism of *Dar al-Islam* in modern Islamic history.

Al-rihla Conclusion

Al-rihla as a concept has evolved throughout the history of Islam, and, thus, has had different meanings in the past and present, “the exploration of cross-cultural travels of the past from the perspective of the present is a comparison across history” (Euben, 2006, p. 174). Through travel the unfamiliar becomes common, and “difference can be as fascinating as familiar is comfortable” (Krenicki, 2004, p. 147). Nevertheless, travel also increases one’s appreciation of their own home and country (Gellens, 1990). In the classical Islamic period, *al-rihla* of Muslim travelers was a social, cultural, and political experience that gave us a written record of the Islamic, as well as some of the non-Islamic, World.

In the modern Islamic period, the concept of al-rihla expanded to include not only physical movements, whether for religious and/or secular motives, but also inner-self journeys of exploration. Euben (2006) argued that “travel allows for three kinds of movements: physical, cultural, and a metaphoric inner journey as an internal movement” (p.108). Al-rihla became a “practice of the pursuit of knowledge about others and oneself by way of literal and imaginative contrasts with seemingly alien lands, peoples, and institutions” (Euben, 2006, p. 15). Thus, travel in this sense, and according to Euben (2006), creates “a conceptual bridge across traditions separated by culture or time,” (p. 15) that facilitates cultural exchange. Such change may advance not only cultural practices in an increasingly multicultural world but also the creation of an international culture and cultural identities. Bhabha (1994) argued that our cultural identities are not only shaped by our culture but also by the cultures of the people we encounter.

Hajj

Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam, initiated for Muslims in the ninth year of hijra. It is obligatory only for Muslims who can afford it, “And hajj to the House (Ka’bah) is a duty that mankind owes to Allah, those who can afford the expense” (Qur’an, 4:97). Millions of Muslims from different ethnic groups, races, and nations and who speak different languages gather in Mecca at a specific time every year to conduct hajj. Hajj is both a physical and spiritual journey for millions of Muslims, who gather as one *Umma* (community) of believers in one God to reinforce their Islamic brotherhood and seek forgiveness from Allah. It is only during hajj that Muslims gather in “one place at one time for one purpose on earth” (Wolfe, 1997, p. xiii).

Hajj as a pillar of Islam and a religious practice has remained unchanged throughout Islamic history. Muslims conduct hajj seeking forgiveness from God and Paradise as the everlasting reward of hajj: “And proclaim to mankind the *Hajj*. They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel, they will come from every deep and distant (wide) mountain highway (to perform hajj)” (Qur’an, 17: 27). Hajj is not only a matter of travel to Mecca, but rather, “a journey through time as well as space for the purpose of bonding people to a primordial religion, the ethical monotheism of Abraham” (Wolfe, 1997, p. xix). Hajj is the biggest multicultural event in the world and the best opportunity for Muslims from all around the world to gather and unite as one Umma.

Recently, the concept of hajj and its accounts have been explored in terms of an individual’s experience of travel. Hajj is perceived as both a physical movement and a spiritual experience that “reveals the cultural world through which the traveler filters what he sees” (Metcalf, 1990, p. 89). Hajj narratives have developed into a genre of their own. In these accounts, according to Metcalf (1990), the pilgrim is at the center of the narrative rather than the hajj itself, “my eyes were moist and I wept – quite apart from what my beliefs were and what they weren’t” (p. 91). Hajj accounts have become similar to literary works, in that they contain elements of modern novels and autobiographical accounts, including passages such as “alone as a matter of the heart” and “easing the pain of separation” (Metcalf, 1990, p. 92). Metcalf (1990) suggested that these accounts are to be read, bearing in mind three types of changes: 1) changes in society, 2) changes in interpretation of central religious symbols, and 3) changes in connects of individuality

(p. 87). In this sense, Hajj has developed into a journey to one's inner self as well as a religious obligation.

Hijra

Hijra is a linguistic term meaning “to abandon”, “to break ties with someone” or “to migrate”. In the Qur'an, hijra has different meanings according to the context. It means “to reject” (Qur'an, 23:69), “to shun” (Qur'an, 74:5), “to depart” (Qur'an, 19:46) and “to banish” (Qur'an, 4:34) (Masud, 1991, p.32). For the purpose of this study, I will use the meaning “to migrate” when referring to hijra.

The history of Islamic society starts with the first hijra, the flight of the Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) and his companions from Mecca to Medina in AD 622, whereby they escaped the persecution of the unbelievers and abandoned their homes, non-Muslim relatives, and their wealth. Hijra also refers to the migration of Muslims' from non-Muslim lands, *dar al-kufr*, such as Mecca (at that time), to Muslim lands, *dar al-Islam*, including Medina.

Whether Hijra should be considered a religious obligation has long been under debate. The Shafi'i school of law argues that hijra is “an obligation only after the declaration of jihad, and then only upon those who have the ability to do so,” while the Maliki jurists argue that hijra “was not an obligation after Mecca was conquered” (Masud, 1990, p. 37). According to Masud (1990), in the Maliki school of law hijra is obligatory in six cases: fleeing from the territories of unbelievers, injustice, unlawfulness, physical persecution, disease, and financial insecurity” (p. 37). Al-Busti (AD 931-96/8), a scholar of hadith, argued that hijra after the prophet's migration is not

obligatory, “no migration was required after the conquest” (as cited in Masud, 1990, p. 33), while, Ibn Khaldun (AD 1332-1406), a Muslim scholar and theologian, argued that, “*hijra* meant to join the Prophet, and might have continued to be an obligation after the conquest of Mecca, but it was definitely not required after the death of the Prophet” (p. 33). Ali Ibn Hajar [al-Asqalani] (d. AD 1449) analyzed this debate and showed that a “number of the companions of the prophet perceived *hijra* as only a migration from Mecca to Medina” (Masud, 1990, p. 33). From a spiritual philosophy and perspective, *Suffis*, who belong to the third division of Islam, believe that *hijra* is a “migration from the land of human beings to the presence of Allah (God)” (Masud, 1990, p. 36).

Additionally, in a review of the hadith literature, some scholars argued that although some hadith consider *hijra* as an obligation, at least one other hadith states that *hijra* is not an obligation after the conquest of Mecca, “no migration was required after the conquest” (as cited in Masud, 1990, p. 33). Finally, Karpas (1996) argued that *hijra* was a flight and early Muslim migrants were fugitives fleeing the persecution of unbelievers in Mecca. Centuries later, after the first *hijra*, five to seven million Muslim peasants were encouraged or forced to “emigrate” from Russia and the Balkan States to the Ottoman Empire during the period from 1850-1914 (Karpas, 1990, p. 133); they fled the persecution of non-Muslim landlords to find refuge in Muslim lands (*dar al-Islam*).

After 1922, *hijra* assumed a different shape and form due to the influence of advanced Western educational, training, and technological systems. And Muslim scholars endorsed a new type of *hijra* for Muslims, arguing that “education and training in modern science and technology are obligatory for the progress of Muslim societies,

otherwise they (Muslim countries) would remain dependent on developed countries” (as cited in Masud, 1990, p. 42).

In the nineteenth century, the concept of hijra became more associated with social and individual practices than religious obligation, due to political unrest, ethnic conflicts, civil wars, dictatorships and/or suppressed regimes, and economic and humanitarian deterioration in the Muslim lands (dar al-Islam). The migration of Muslims to non-Muslim countries, especially Europe and the U.S., increased due to their more secure living conditions, better job opportunities, more advanced technology, greater variety of educational programs, and faster transportation and communications. The new concept of hijra, in modern Islamic history, has “encouraged self-exile and immigration from colonized or non-democratic territories” (Elmadmad, 1991, p. 469) to other places. It was estimated, according to Huntington (1996), that two-thirds of the migrants to Europe in the 1990s were Muslims. Elmadmad (1991) noted that Muslims, nowadays, constitute the largest global population of refugees and asylees, as recorded from global migration statistics.

Hijra Conclusion

According to Aslan (2005), there is a perception that Islam, as a social practice, reached its culmination with the death of the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) in 632 C.E. But, Aslan argued that it would take time for “theological development” and the “unfolding of Islamic thought, the fixing of the modalities of Islamic practice, [and] the establishment of Islamic institutions” (as cited in Aslan, 2005, p. 111). As such, the term hijra is one of the many terms/religious topics under debate by Muslim scholars, who

may have different interpretations of the term hijra. Nor are those different interpretations, or *fatwas*, as Elmadmad (1991) argued, collected in one book or resource as a reference, “there is no general theory of hijra and asylum in the Arab and Moslem literature, but they are frequently mentioned in the sources and in fatwa literature,” and such references are “scattered throughout the Books of Islamic Laws” (p. 463).

The concept of hijra has long been under debate by different Islamic schools of law and through individual *ijtihad*. An *ijtihad* is a legal opinion of a jurist who is consulted in response to a question concerning either a religious or civil matter. In Islam, a *faqih*, or jurisconsult, is encouraged to practice *ijtihad* (Makdisi, 1981, p. 2). Makdisi (1981) argued that a jurisconsult “exerts himself to the utmost in the study of the Sacred Scripture, the Koran and hadith, and in researching the sources of the law, in order to arrive at his legal opinion” (pp. 276-277). The jurisconsult is called a *mujtahid* (not listed in the definitions section in Chapter I), and he practices *ijtihad*, “freely, answerable to God alone” (p. 277). Makdisi (1981) added that “all legal opinions, *ijtihad*, per se are valid in the eyes of the law and constitute the substance from which Islamic doctrine is derived through the principle of consensus” (p. 277). Opinions that receive approval from the community are applied, while other opinions that fail to win community support are ignored. Thus, *ijtihad* is problematic, as not all *mujtahids* are *faqih* in their knowledge of the Qur’an, hadith, and in researching the sources of law.

Although the Qur’an mentions the term, hijra, in 27 verses, this term has been interpreted and applied in various ways during different eras of Islamic history. Recently/currently the term is “used very often, in the modern Islamic period, to

designate the fact of fleeing from a country governed by the infidels in order to join the Muslim community” (Abu-Sahlieh, 1996, p. 37). Crone (1994) argued that because Mecca was “particularly unholy” it was a necessity to leave it and return to it later, to “successfully transform it into the central shrine of Islam” (p. 386). Crone asserted that, “the closure of the duty of hijra is thus connected, not only to the waning of the Umayyad (660-750 CE) influence on society, but also with the elevation of Mecca to the central sanctuary of Islam” (p. 386). According to Elmadmad (1991), it was necessary for the classical open-ended concept of hijra to be abandoned, so that a new concept of hijra could emerge into the contemporary world. Muslims in the modern Islamic period are facing new challenges, changing social circumstances, economic hardships, and above all, political unrest under non-democratic regimes. Accordingly, the concept of hijra has been reinterpreted to reflect the current situation of Muslims. The old interpretation of hijra, the migration of Muslims from non-Muslim to Muslim lands, is not valid anymore, thus, most of Dar al-Islam is no longer helpful to Muslims.

Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism is an interdisciplinary movement of thought that represents distinct forms of critical practice (Peters, 1999). It is a response to theories whose goal is to discover structures in society, culture, and the human psyche (Pinar et al., 2002). Poststructuralism has been commonly associated with Foucault, Lacan, Derrida and others. It has been argued that structuralists in their attempts to “establish a system of homogeneous relations” (Pinar et al., 2002, p. 461) do not consider the political makeup of such system. Foucault (1982) asserted that the state is a new type of political power

which is envisioned as “a kind of political power which ignores individuals, looking only at the interest of the totality ... or of a class or a group among the citizens” (p. 782).

For poststructuralists, discourse, or knowledge, does not represent reality but rather constructs it (Pinar et al., 2002), through “interpretations and interpretations of interpretations” (Foucault, as cited in Pinar et al., 2002, p. 465). Foucault examined knowledge and the effects of power on the creation of knowledge. He argued that “knowledge is power” as it, “provides the means by which power effects are produced” (Wong, 2007, p. 7). Wong (2007) noted that for Foucault power and knowledge are linked in an inseparable, internal rather than external, “circular relation” (p. 7).

However, the main objective of Foucault’s work was not to analyze the phenomena of power, but rather to “create a history of the different modes by which ... human beings are made subjects” (Foucault, 1982, p. 777). Foucault’s work can be divided into three modes of inquiry: 1) “modes try to give themselves the status of sciences, 2) modes of objectivizing subject through ‘dividing practices’, and 3) modes as the way a human being turns himself into a subject” (Foucault, 1982, p. 778). Although Foucault (1982) asserted that the subject is the essence of his study, he argued that power relationships influence human subjects and should be considered in terms of “production and signification” (p. 778). He further asserted that power influences human subjects in everyday life and should be considered in categorizing individuals, distinguishing them according to their own individuality, associating them to a specific identity, and imposing a “law of truth” on them (Foucault, 1982, p. 781). For Foucault (1982), power is evident in three characteristics, “its origin, its basic nature, and its

manifestations” (p. 785). Foucault discussed the relationship between power and language and asserted that power is experienced through language and that language, “not only describes and defines human beings but also creates institutions to regulate and govern human beings. Literally, power is inscribed in our bodies and language governs our mentality. (Slattery & Rapp, 2002, p. 110)

Power is manifested through a wide range of social institutions, from socio-political and economic structures to the educational and other social realms (Kincheloe, Slattery, & Steinberg, 2000). Contemporary power exists in the form of disciplinary power that has the authority to both punish and “transform individuals into subjects” (Kincheloe et al., 2000, p.176). In his work *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault examined the social and theoretical systems utilized in the West during the modern age. He criticized the prison system as it has become a consistent form of power manifestation, discipline, and punishment. Foucault traced the history of punishment in Western culture focusing on power and the human body, and noted that power and knowledge went through two stages of development. Firstly, it was a “means of control or neutralization of dangerous social elements,” and, secondly, it was “cultivated within isolated institutions” (Rouse, 2005, p. 4).

Foucault investigated “how domination is achieved and individuals are socially constructed in modern world” (Garland, 1986, p. 848), and he examined the history of the prison system based on Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon structure and design for prisons. In the Panopticon structure, a single guard can observe many prisoners but cannot be seen by them. Bentham’s Panopticon is based on the principle that “power

should be visible and unverifiable” (Foucault, 1975, p. 198). However, the Panopticon is not a prison per se, but rather a “general principle of construction, the polyvalent apparatus of surveillance, the universal optical machine of human groupings” (Miller & Miller, 1987, p. 3). For Foucault, the prison system included various institutionalized systems such as hospitals, army camps, schools, and factories.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1975), examined the history of torture, punishment, discipline, and prison in the French/ West penal system and provided an analysis of these four components. Foucault (1975) traced the history of torture and noted that it developed from a theatrical forum of public execution with the tortured “body” of the prisoner being displayed to the public, into a “punishment of a less immediately physical kind, a certain discretion in the art of inflicting pain, a combination of more subtle, more subdued sufferings, deprived of visible display” (p. 7). Of punishment, Foucault wrote that the development of punishment of the “body” from physical torture to what he calls a “gentle punishment” was a “general change of attitude,”

a change that belongs to the domain of the spirit and the subconscious ...? Perhaps, but more certainly and more immediately it was an effort to adjust the mechanisms of power that frame the everyday lives of individuals, and adaptation and a refinement of the machinery that assumes responsibility for and places under surveillance their everyday behavior, their identity, their activity, their apparently unimportant gestures, another policy for that multiplicity” (p. 77).

Foucault argued that “discipline” is a type of power, “a modality for its exercise, comprising a whole set of instruments, techniques, procedures, levels of application,

targets” (p. 203). Furthermore, Foucault identified two distinct images of the application of discipline:

the discipline-blockade, the enclosed institution , established on the edges of society, turned inwards towards negative functions, and the discipline-mechanism which is a functional mechanism that must improve the exercise of power by making it lighter, more rapid, more effective, a design of subtle coercion for a society to come. (p. 202)

Finally, Foucault examined the prison system as a part of the structure of modern society that includes schools, hospitals, factories and other institutions built on the Panopticon model. Being sent to prison is a penalty based on the “deprivation of liberty” (p. 232) for individuals in a society that celebrates freedom. And it is within the prison system that discipline can be instilled and “disciplinary careers” created. However, Foucault (1975) argued that “prisons do not diminish the crime rate: they can be extended, multiplied or transformed, and the quantity of crime and criminals remains stable or, worse, increases” (p. 265).

Knowledge in Islam

Knowledge in Islam is of two kinds: *fard ‘ain* and *fard kifaya*. *Fard ‘ain* is an obligatory type of knowledge for male and female Muslims who are mature, healthy, and sane. These Muslims must learn about the practices of worship, ritual, and ways to follow their religion and apply it in their everyday life. *Fard kifaya* is a collective duty for all of the community, but if it is fulfilled by a part of that community, the rest are not obliged to fulfill it. It is, then, obligatory for at least one person in the Muslim community, so that he/she can serve the community as a doctor, teacher, nurse, or to fill other types of community needs.

The terms, “*Ilm*”, “*Talab al-ilm*”, and “*Talib al-ilm*”, in Islam, may roughly be translated to knowledge, the search for knowledge, and the seeker of knowledge, respectively. Rosenthal stated that “every term translated is a term distorted, no matter how much care has been spent on finding the most suitable English equivalent” (Rosenthal, 1970, p. 3). The translation of the Arabic word “*ilm*” is no exception. The translation of *ilm* into ‘knowledge’ in English, in fact, “falls short of expressing all the factual and emotional content of ‘*ilm*,’” (Rosenthal, 1970, p. 1) in the Arabic language and Islamic culture. Netton (1996) added that *ilm*, though translated as ‘knowledge’, “should be given the meaning of learning” (p. vii). However, *ilm* in Islam is a concept that holds a significant importance as it impacts “Muslims’ intellectual, religious, political, and daily life” (Rosenthal, 1970, p. 2). In fact, the concept of *ilm* has shaped Muslim civilization distinctively and uniquely.

Ilm, in Islam, begins with reading and writing, as the Qur’an makes clear, with the first word that was revealed to Prophet Mohammed (pbuh): Read (Recite).

“Read! In the Name of your Lord Who has created (all that exists). He has created man from a clot (piece of thick coagulated blood). Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous. Who has taught (the writing) by the pen. He has taught man that which he knew not” (Qur’an, 30: 96).

Talab al-‘ilm, seeking knowledge, and *talib al’ilm*, the seeker of knowledge, have been mentioned in the Qur’an with pride and dignity, and elevated to a high status,

"Allah will raise up, to (suitable) ranks and (degrees), those of you who believe and who have been granted knowledge. And Allah is well-acquainted with all you do"(Qur'an, 58:11).

“Say [unto them, O, Mohammad] Are those who know equal to those who know not? But only men of understanding will pay heed” (Qur’an, 39:9).

"And say: My Lord increase me in knowledge" (Qur'an, 20:114).

And in hadith:

"The *ulama* (scholars) are the heritage of the prophets"

"Seeking knowledge is obligatory on every Muslim and Muslima (be it male and female)"

"Seek knowledge even in China"

"Seek knowledge from cradle to grave"

In hadiths on al-rihla for the search for knowledge:

"One who treads a path in search of knowledge has his path to Paradise made easy by God"

"He who follows a road seeking knowledge, God will make the path to heaven easy for him. And the angels will place their wings so as to aid the seeker of knowledge. And all in heaven and on earth, even the snake in the water, will seek forgiveness from such a person. The merit of the learned man over the worshipper is like the merit of the moon over the rest of the stars. The *ulama* are the heritage of the prophets. The latter did not bequeath *dinars* and *dirhams*. Rather they left behind knowledge. He who takes it should do with an abundance of good fortune" (Ibn Majah, 1972:1, *hadith* no. 223).

The above mentioned verses and hadiths emphasize the importance that Islam places on knowledge, its virtues, and travel in search of it. The search for knowledge as a theme and practice, has "dominated Islam and given Muslim Civilization its distinctive shape and complexion" (Netton, 1996, p. xii). In fact, knowledge, in Islam, comes before deeds in importance, as in the hadith: "A learned one is as much above an (ordinary) worshiper as I am above the least of you."

Medieval Muslim Society

The Muslim World during the Medieval Islamic era was widespread, comprised of large territories that extended from the Near East, China, and the Indian subcontinent into the Middle East, Iraq, Syria, Jerusalem, Iran, and Central Asia. These territories included Burkharth (Uzbekistan), Ethrebeijan, and Samarkand and the Southern part of the Turks land, all the way to Egypt, Sudan, and Maghrib in North Africa and reaching Southern Europe, Spain, Sicily, and the Mediterranean sea, in the North, to the Arabian peninsula and Sea, in the South. The Medieval Muslim world encompassed almost six thousand miles between the Atlantic and Indian oceans.

Between the seventh and thirteenth centuries four different overlapping Islamic dynasties were established: the Umayyads (756-1031), who designated Damascus as their capital, the Abbasids (750-1258), who selected Baghdad as their capital, the separate Umayyad dynasty in Spain/Al-Andulus, who used Cordoba as their capital, and, finally, the Fatimid dynasty in Egypt and northwest Africa (909-1171) (Turner, 1995).

During the reigns of these four dynasties the Muslim world witnessed a burgeoning economy due to agricultural and industrial revolutions resulting from the use of advanced technology and scientific methods. At the same time, trading expanded greatly both within and outside of the Muslim world. The Islamic territories were rich with natural resources and metals, such as gold, silver, copper, and tin, “in the history of the world currencies the Muslim World is remarkable for its steady supply of precious metal” (Lombard, 1975, p. 117).

During the Abbasid dynasty, language translation programs and centers of learning flourished. Muslim Caliphs in Baghdad and Damascus, the cultural centers of the Muslim world during medieval times, sponsored the translation of Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit manuscripts in philosophy, medicine, and other scientific works into Arabic (Turner, 1995). Within two centuries, Turner asserted that the “major works of Plato, Aristotle, Euclid, Archimedes, Hippocrates, Galen, Ptolemy, and many other” (p. 29) works were made available to Muslim scholars. Muslims were able to learn paper production from the Chinese, and as a result of the availability of paper as a writing medium and this significant translation endeavor, great libraries were established in both the Eastern and Western centers of knowledge. Religious centers of scholarly learning were established in Baghdad, Cairo, Nishapur, Hijaz (Medina), and Fez. A science academy was established at both Cordoba in al-Andalus and at Toledo, and in the Nizamiyya and Dar-al-Hikma universities in Baghdad. Advances in knowledge occurred in a myriad of fields, including philosophy, social sciences, physics, mathematics, medicine, alchemy, geometrical sciences, astronomy, religious science, optics, and metaphysics. It is an undeniable fact that Medieval Muslim scientists, physicians, and philosophers made contributions to global civilization in both the medieval and post-medieval eras. And, as a result of peace and political stability in the Medieval Muslim world, and encouragement from the Qur’an and hadith, travel in search of knowledge became a phenomenon and a “normative feature of Medieval Muslim education” (Gellens, 1990, p. 55).

The period between 750 and 1258 CE in Medieval Islamic history was characterized as the Golden Age of Muslim civilization. Many factors contributed to this achievement; such as: the adherence to Islamic guidelines in the search for knowledge, facilitated communication between Muslim scholars throughout the entire Muslim world, access to Arabic translations of manuscripts in Greek, Latin, and other languages, production of paper and books (learned from the Chinese), the institution of public libraries in Cairo, Aleppo, Baghdad, central Asia, and Spain, and the establishment of the house of Wisdom, an academic institution serving as a university, in Baghdad in 1004 CE (Falagas, Zarkadoulia, & Samonis, 2006, pp. 1581-1582).

In addition, new theories and educational philosophies were developed at the instructional level. Medieval Muslim thinkers who wrote about educational theories and philosophies included “theologians, philosophers, jurists, litterateurs, hadith scholars, and scientists” (Gunther, 2006, p. 369). Their works contributed significantly to the advancement of the search for knowledge in Medieval Muslim society as well as to the art and science of pedagogy and didactics. The theories that are presented in these works deal with both basic and higher levels of education in Islam and “explain and analyze teaching methods ... the aims of education, how education goals are to be achieved, actions and behaviors of both students and teachers, didactics and organization and content of learning as well as curriculum, and the means and methods of imparting and acquiring knowledge” (Gunther, 2006, p. 369).

In the following sections, I will briefly present the theories and educational philosophies of five prominent Muslim scholars: Ibn Sahnun, Al-Jahiz, Al-Farabi, Ibn

Sina, and Al-Ghazali; emphasizing the importance of learning and the search for knowledge in Medieval Muslim society.

Ibn Sahnun (816-870)

Ibn Sahnun was the first Medieval Muslim scholar to write a handbook about teaching for teachers, entitled *Rule of Conduct for Teachers* (Adab al-mu'allimin). He was an Arab jurist and a chief judge who was born and lived in al-Qayrawan (currently Tunis). In his book, he discussed issues and problems that teachers may encounter with students in elementary schools. Ibn Sahnun provided ninth-century elementary teachers with "instructions and rules that range from aspects of curriculum and examination to practical legal advice in such matters as the appointment and payment of the teacher, the organization of teaching and the teacher's work with pupils at school, supervision of pupils at schools" and even teachers' responsibilities for pupils on their way home. His book, furthermore, "emphasizes just treatment of pupils, classroom and teaching equipment and the pupils' graduation." He recommended a curriculum that included the basics of language and grammar, good handwriting, arithmetic, poetry, and historical reports (Gunther, 2006, p. 370). Also, he encouraged instructors to assign individual and group work that challenged students' minds in a creative way.

Al-Jahiz (ca. 776-868)

Al-Jahiz was born in Basra, Iraq; he was a celebrated man of letters and a theologian. Al-Jahiz's educational philosophy was in contrast to that of Ibn Sahnun. Al-Jahiz's book to teachers, entitled *The Book of Teachers* (Kitab al-Mu'allimin), was based

on a literary-philosophical point of view, in which he emphasized reasoning and thinking instead of rote memorization as methods for acquiring knowledge.

The leading sages, masters of the art of deductive reasoning and [independent] thinking, were averse to excellence in memorization, because of [one's] dependence on it and [its rendering] the mind negligent of rational judgment, so [much so] that they said: "Memorization inhibits the intellect." [They were averse to it] because the one engaged in memorization is only an imitator, whereas deductive reasoning is that which brings the one engaged in it to calculated certainty and great confidence. (Gunther, 2006, p. 372)

In addition, Al-Jahiz asserted that students must be encouraged to learn how to express themselves in a clear and vivid way, and to understand that content is prior to style. He discussed student's mental abilities and argued that a teacher must take into consideration his/her student's varying levels of mental ability (a forerunner of the differentiated teaching/learning style and special needs that are common in today's educational practices).

Al-Farabi/ Avennasar (870-950)

Abu Nasr al-Farabi (known as Avennasar, in medical education) was one of the most influential philosophers of his time. He was of Turkish origin, lived in Iraq and Syria, and, during his lifetime, was referred to as the "second teacher" after Aristotle. Al-Farabi was one of the first Muslim scholars to propose an "integrated curriculum for the higher learning of both "foreign" and "religious" sciences" (Gunther, 2006, p. 373). His use of the term "foreign" referred to Greek philosophy and science, and his use of the term "religious" referred to curricula based on the Qur'an and its interpretation. His philosophy was based on the distinction between divine and human knowledge; in his treatise *The Demonstration* (al-Burhan), al-Farabi's theory of instruction was discussed

logically and he differentiated between the two Arabic terms “*ta’lim*” and “*talqin*”.

Though, basically, both of these terms refer to teaching and instruction, he made a clear cut distinction between the two in his teaching/learning practices. For al-Farabi, and according to Gunther (2006), “*ta’lim* results in understanding, or in an aptitude for acquiring understanding, while *talqin*, whose aim is not the acquisition of knowledge, results in a strengthened character that produced action” (p. 374). Al-Farabi believed that human instruction should be examined within the parameters of philosophy, and, thus, the purpose of instruction was to achieve an understanding (*ma’rifa*) of new things; that building upon previous knowledge is significant (constructivism); and increasing one’s knowledge is a natural human desire (Gunther, 2006).

Al-Farabi further analyzed the process of instruction as follows:

Every instruction is composed of two things: (a) making what is being studied comprehensible and causing its idea to be established in the soul [of the student], and (b) causing others to assent to what is comprehended and established in the soul. There are two ways of making a thing comprehensible: first, by causing its essence to be perceived by the intellect, and second, by causing it to be imagined through the similitude that imitates it. Assent, too, is brought about by one of two methods, either by ... [conclusive] demonstration or by ... persuasion. (Gunther, 2006, p. 375)

Ibn Sina/ Avicenna (980-1037)

Ibn Sina was a prominent figure who was, in turn, a philosopher, physician, natural scientist, and an administrator. He was born in Bukhara (present-day Uzbekistan) and lived in Isfahan and Hamadan (Iran), and his works and writings were in Arabic. His philosophy was based on his belief that the world is based on two pillars: Greek philosophy and Qur’anic revelation. Ibn Sina believed that the actual process of knowing

begins with the five external senses, which reach their “pinnacle in humankind” and differentiate man from animals. Furthermore, Ibn Sina argued that humans have “two intellectual faculties due to the presence of the soul: the practical and the theoretical intellect”. The former governs bodily movements, and the latter governs the “higher order of reasoning and thought processes within the soul” (Gunther, 2006, p. 377).

Gunther (2006) noted that Ibn Sina distinguished four different processes of the theoretical intellect as being characteristics specific to humans, only:

the potential to acquire knowledge, the ability to use the acquired knowledge and to actually think, this knowledge serves the ability to generate intellectual activity in order to understand more complex concepts, and, finally, the ability to internalize knowledge of the intelligible world. (p. 377)

These ideas are significant to the fields of childhood, as well as adult, education.

However, Ibn Sina had a special interest in education for the young as is demonstrated in his monumental *Canon of Medicine* (al-Qanun fil-Tibb), which is a book that summarizes all the medical knowledge of Ibn Sina’s age, “augmented by his own observations”. In this book he provides insights into “certain physical, emotional, and intellectual aspects of child development”; first, at the beginning of their growth, and, then, continuing to the more “general aspects to a child’s education in the period from infancy to adolescence” (Gunther, 2006, p. 378).

Al-Ghazali (1058-1111)

Al-Ghazali is considered to be the greatest Islamic theologian and the main critic of Ibn Sina. Born in Tuz (Iran), he was a mystic and religious reformer who, at the age of 33, was appointed to head the newly founded Nizamiyya College in Baghdad in 1091,

as a professor of canonical Islamic law. Al-Ghazali approached teaching and learning from an entirely different perspective; he accepted Greek logic as a “neutral instrument of learning and for recommending it for theologians”. He, further, incorporated “basically Aristotelian ethical values into an Islamic mode, and, as a mystic theologian, he insists that the path to mystical gnosis must begin with traditional Islamic belief” (Gunther, 2006, p. 381). His educational philosophy stemmed from his vision of education as “guidance rather than correction of the young”. In his work *The Revival of the Sciences of Religion (Ihya’ ‘ulum al-din)*, Al-Ghazali wrote of his “deep conviction that religious knowledge and education are a means for humans in this world to attain salvation in the world to come” (Gunther, 2006, p. 381). For him, true knowledge did not simply consist of memorized facts, but rather “a light which floods the heart”. In his book, he specified rules for both students and teachers to follow to achieve the best teaching and learning outcomes using his pedagogical ideas. Some of these rules emphasized that education should be spiritual (purification of the heart), moral (the student must not place himself above his teacher), intellectual (the student must learn how to judge the noble nature of a science) (Gunther, 2006), and a social practice for the benefit of society,

“Be sure that knowledge alone is no support ... If a man reads a hundred thousand scientific subjects and learns them but does not act upon them, his knowledge is of no use to him, for its benefit lies only in being used” (as cited in Halstead, 2004, p. 520).

Thus, as a result of the concepts of talab al-‘ilm and talib al-‘ilm, and the advancement in educational theories, philosophies and practices, the Medieval Muslim

civilization became a global center of knowledge, not only for Muslim scholars but also for scholars from all over the world.

Medieval Muslim Travelers

For the purpose of this study, the researcher analyzed the biographies and travel accounts of three MMT: 1) Nasir Khusraw in the eleventh century, Ibn Jubayr in the twelfth century, and, Ibn Battuta in the fourteenth century. Although the biographies of these three MMT were similar, in that they all embarked on a journey to Mecca to conduct hajj, one of the five pillars of Islam, their personal and religious motivations for undergoing the journey varied greatly. A brief biography and introduction to the works and philosophies of each one of these three MMT is given below.

Nasir Khusraw (1004-1077)

Biography

Abu Mo'in Hamid ad-Din Nasir ibn Khusraw al-Qubadiani or Nāsir Khusraw Qubādiyānī (1004-1088), also known as Nasir Khusraw, was born in Khurasan (Iran today) during the eleventh century into a family that was politically connected to the Saljuq government. Khusraw was a famous poet, moralist and theologian and well educated in Greek philosophy, Islamic studies and theology, science, and literature; he also occupied several high positions at the court of the Saljuq. In his early life, Khusraw was a bureaucrat and wine connoisseur, but, at the age of forty, a visionary dream “transformed him into a devoted man of faith” (Thackson, 1986, p. vii). The next year, he embarked on a journey to Mecca to conduct hajj and seek God’s forgiveness for his sins. Khusraw conducted hajj four times during his al-rihla, which lasted seven years,

during which he visited different parts of the Muslim world and recorded his experiences in his book, *Safarnama*. It is believed that during his visit to Cairo, in the Fatimid period, he converted to Ismailism and spent three years studying to become an Ismaili scholar. When he returned home, Khusraw was forced into exile as a result of his Ismaili beliefs which were in opposition to those of the authorities at that time. He spent his last decade of his life in exile in Badakhshan (today known as Tajikistan and Afghanistan), and died in Yamagan in 1077.

Works and Philosophy

Khusraw was an intellectual philosopher and composed all of his works in the Persian language. His writing may be divided into three different genres; his travel account, *Safarnama*, or memoirs in prose; his poetry collection, *Diwan*; and his work *The Book of Light* which discusses his philosophical doctrine of Ismailism (Glasse, 2008) Although some sections of *Safarnama* had previously been translated into English in 1986 it was translated in its entirety into English by Thackston (Thackston, 1986, p. viii).

The Ismaili philosophy dates back to the Fatimid period (10th-12th century) in Cairo; it is a division of Islamic Shi'at doctrine that has a core belief that God will give man a revelation along with a guide to interpret it. This guide, according to Ismaili doctrine, must be “a living person, the Imam of his time, divinely inspired, infallible, capable of providing worldly and spiritual guidance to his followers” (Hunsberger, 2005, p. 2). Ismailis also believe in the exoteric (zahir) and esoteric (batin) doctrines that refer to the “outward and inward dimensions of Islam in daily life” (Hunsberger, 2005, p.

458). However, Ismailism is based on the concept of *tawhid*, or oneness/Unity with God, and thus it

seeks to extend the meaning of religion and revelation to identify the visible and the apparent [*zahir*] and also to penetrate to the roots, to retrieve and disclose that which is interior or hidden [*batin*]. Ultimately, this discovery engages both the intellect [*'aql*] and the spirit [*ruh*], functioning in an integral manner to illuminate and disclose truths [*haqa'iq*]. (Hunsberger, 2005)

For Khusraw, it is only through *tawhid*, which he defines as the “knowledge of God”, that the “human soul can attain eternal bliss” (Hunsberger, 2000, p. 118). In his philosophical books, Nasir Khusraw addressed a broad range of inquiries about creation, existence, the spirit, and the soul. According to Hunsberger (2000), Khusraw, in his philosophical works, delved into philosophical debates and arguments in an attempt to answer questions such as, “how did the world come to be? What is meant by space, time and matter? What is the relationship between matter and spirit? What is soul and what is intellect? And what are the central ethical issues a believer should be concerned with?” (p. 118).

Ibn Jubayr (1145-1217)

Biography

Abū al-Husayn Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Jubayr al-Kinānī, known as Ibn Jubayr (1145-1217), was born in Valencia in 1145. He studied the Quran and hadith, religious science, law, mathematics, linguistics and literature; he was a Muslim scholar, courtier, and a poet. Ibn Jubayr was also employed as the secretary to the Almohad governor of Granada.

In 1183, Ibn Jubayr embarked on his al-rihla to conduct hajj as a journey of expiation, after being threatened by the governor of Granada and forced to drink seven cups of wine. The governor later regretted his insensitive order and filled seven wine cups with gold dinars, presenting them to his secretary, Ibn Jubayr. However, Ibn Jubayr, instead, departed to conduct hajj, seeking forgiveness from God for drinking the wine. He conducted hajj three times throughout his life: in 1183-1185, 1189-1191, and in 1217 (Netton, 1996, p. 95).

Ibn Jubayr is famous for his book of travel, *Rihla*, based upon his first journey to conduct hajj, in which he kept a detailed journal of his travel experiences. This book was translated and edited by William Wright and published under the title, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*, in 1856; it was later revised by M. J. De Goeje in 1907. Unfortunately, Ibn Jubayr only documented his first journey to conduct hajj.

In his book, *Rihla*, Ibn Jubayr documented his visits to monuments, educational institutions, sacred places, and the people from various cultures he met. He “recorded knowledge about what he saw and where he traveled with the eagerness of a magpie” (Netton, 1996, p. x). Many articles in the Encyclopedia Britannica and the Encyclopedia of Islam “show how largely the western orientalist have relied on Ibn Jubayr’s description of the sacred cities” (p. 26) in medieval Islam. Ibn Jubayr’s account is considered as an “extremely valuable resource” for medieval art and architecture (p. 98) for its “precision and details ... to measurements, dimensions and distances, large and small” (p. 99).

Ibn Jubayr visited many places and cities in the Muslim World, such as Alexandria, Sicily, Cairo, Damascus, Baghdad, Jerusalem, Mecca and Medina. After conducting his last hajj, he returned to Alexandria, where he died in 1217.

Works and Philosophy

Ibn Jubayr's journal of his travel account, *Rihla*, is his most famous work and has been widely circulated throughout the East and West and translated into English. Of his poetry, some specimens have been preserved, among which are "two of his best known pieces ... one composed on his first approach to al-Madinah; the other addressed to the Sultan (ruler) Salah al-din" (Wright, 1907, p. 13).

Ibn Jubayr was a Sunni Muslim who adhered to the Maliki School of law. Schools of law in Islam are based on the "different interpretations and exegesis of the Qur'an and the *Sunna* of the Prophet" (Mansour, 1995, p. 2). For Sunnis, there are four schools of law, or *mathahib*; Hanafi, Hanbali, Maliki, and Shafii. Each of these schools of law consists of a legal system named after its founder, who was a Muslim scholar. These four schools of law, according to Waliullah (1954), differ from each other only in their "opinions on certain questions of details in legal propositions" (Waliullah, 1954, p. 136). These four legal systems have developed out of the *usul al-fiqh* "foundation of sacred law" in Islam (Glasse, 2008, p. 465), and are derived from its four roots: the Qur'an, the *Sunna* of the Prophet, *ijma'* (consensus), and *qiyas* (reasoning by analogy) (Mansour, 1995).

The founder of the Maliki School of law was Abu Abd Allah Malik Ibn Anas (d. 179/795), known as Imam Malik, who studied with Ja'far as-Sadiq, the great scholar and

descendant of the Prophet (pbuh). Imam Malik received traditions from Sahl Ibn Sa'd, one of the last surviving companions of the Prophet (pbuh), and studied jurisprudence with Rabi'ah ibn Abd al-Rahman, an eminent jurist. At the age of seventeen, Imam Malik started teaching jurisprudence and continued to do so until he died in his early eighties. Maliki's book, the *Muwatta* (The Path Made Smooth), was the first book of law (Glasse, 2008, p. 320) that, "catapulted him to the pinnacle of fame and drew to him seekers of knowledge from all over the Islamic world" (Mansour, 1995, p. 18).

Walliullah (1954) recounted Imam Malik's vision of the relationship between knowledge and seekers of knowledge in this incident,

Harun-ur-Rashid (the Caliphate of Abbasid in Baghdad) once requested Malik to come to the palace [Caliph's palace] and narrate the traditions of the *Muwatta* to his children. Malik's response was that, "people come after knowledge, not knowledge after people." The princes attended the school of Malik, in the mosque, after that. (p. 143)

The Maliki School of law predominated in the Arab West and Southern Egypt in the Medieval Muslim world; currently, it is dominant in all of Muslim Africa except in Upper Egypt.

Mansour (1995) argued that geographical factors heavily affected the teachings embraced by the Islamic schools of law. As Imam Malik was born and lived his entire life in Medina, he emphasized the prophet's hadith and *Sunna*, while his counterpart, Abu Hanifa, the founder of the Hanifi school of law, who was born in Iraq and lived in Qufa, emphasized personal reasoning. The Malikis, according to Mansour, "rejected human reason and believed that every law must be derived from the Qur'an or the Prophet's *Sunna* as recorded in hadith" (p. 3). The Maliki School "relied heavily on the

religious practice of the people of Medina and the sayings of the Companions (the early Muslims who accompanied the Prophet)". The Malikis, thus, are known as the People of Tradition, while the Hanifis (the followers of Imam Abu Hanifa) are known as the People of Opinion (Bello, 1968, p. 4).

Ibn Battuta (1304-1378)

Biography

Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Abdullah Al Lawati Al Tanji Ibn Battuta (1304-1378), also known as Ibn Battuta, was a Moorish Arab from Tangier and is possibly the greatest of the Medieval Muslim travelers. Ibn Battuta has been called the "Arab Marco Polo," "the Marco Polo of the East," and the "traveller of his age" (Harvey, 2007, p. 1).

Ibn Battuta was born into a family of Muslim legal scholars in 1304, and he studied law and became a judge in his early twenties. In 1325 he left his home town with the intention of performing hajj. In his journey, he traveled across North Africa to Cairo and then to Mecca to conduct hajj. He set out on June 14, 1325, travelling through Africa, Spain, Timbuktu, Niger, Oman, Asia Minor, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Samarkand, Bukhara, Afghanistan, India, China, the Maldives Islands, Ceylon, Java and Sumatra. It has been argued that he covered a distance of 75,000 miles on his journey and met with more than 2,000 people, among whom were "rulers, great notables, saints, religious scholars, viziers, governors and other dignitaries" (Wha, 1991, p. 1). His travels lasted nearly 30 years, during which he conducted hajj four times and, although he wandered between different places and cultures, he always returned to the cultural centers of Islam (Glasse, 2008). He visited with Muslim scholars at various Islamic centers of knowledge

and occupied the position of a judge and a professor of Islamic law in Delhi/India, for several years, beginning in 1341. But, subsequently, he set out on new adventures, travelling by land and sea.

Works and Philosophy

Upon returning to his homeland, the Caliph appointed Ibn Juzayy, a literary scholar, to edit Ibn Battuta's dictation of his travel account. The book of travel, took almost three years to be completed and was entitled, *Tuhfat an-nuuzzar fi ghara'ib al-amsar wa-'aja'ib al-asfar*, *Rihla*. This work is part autobiography and part "cultural history of the second quarter of the fourteenth century" (Dunn, 1986, p. xiv). The *Rihla* book had been translated into "major European languages first by two German scholars in the early nineteenth century, by the French scholars, C. Dfremery and B.R. Sanguinetti in 1853, then by the British orientalist Samuel Lee in 1929, and by H.A.R. Gibb in 1958. This work has been also studied as a literary genre" (Wha, 1991, p. 5). The *Rihla* manuscript is, "considered to be a generally accurate account of the countries ... of the ancient world" (Glasse, 2008, p. 220).

The credibility and accuracy of Ibn Battuta's book of travel have long been under dispute, as he dictated his travel account from memory, without making notes or keeping a journal, unlike Ibn Jubayr or Khusraw. Harvey (2007) and other scholars have argued that "long sections of the *Travels of Ibn Battuta* are taken from the *Rihla* of Ibn Jubayr" and some descriptions in Ibn Battuta's book are "openly borrowed from this earlier traveler" (p. 8). However, this debate is beyond the context of this research study, as the focus of the study is limited to several descriptive travel accounts and the cultural

interactions and communication between the traveler and people in the host communities.

The significance of Ibn Battuta's travel account does not lie in his discovery of new lands or visits to places that no man had gone to before, but, "for knitting together with his scores of journeys ... the whole Islamic world from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Muslim fringes of China, from the ice of the Central Asian steppes to the heat of African Sudan" (Harvey, 2007, p. 10).

As a student of law, religious science, Qur'anic exegesis, and theology, Ibn Battuta studied Islamic law according to the Maliki School. The Maliki School of law prevailed throughout North African in the 13th-14th century Islamic era. However, Ibn Battuta developed an interest in Sufism, the mystical dimension of Islam, which was growing more popular at this time, and he was highly influenced by Sufi's ideas and philosophy. Wha (1991) argued that by the time Ibn Battuta left Tangier he was greatly influenced by Sufism, though not a "true sufi adept", and "attended mystical gatherings, seeking the blessing and wisdom of spiritual luminaries, and retreating on occasions into brief periods of ascetic contemplation" (pp. 25-26).

Sufism in its broader sense refers to the mysticism or esoterism of Islam. Linguistically, the word Sufi is thought to be derived from the Arabic word *suf* (wood) in reference to "woolen clothing characterized early ascetics" (Glasse, 2008, p. 498) and detachment from worldly life. It has also been argued that the term is either derived from the Arabic word "*safwe* meaning elected or *suffa* meaning purity", or the Greek word *Sophia*, meaning wisdom and "knowledge of ultimate things" (Aslan, 2005, p. 199). In

its narrowest sense, it refers to a “number of schools of Islamic mystical philosophy and theology, to the phenomenon of religious order and guild (*tariqat*) that have exerted considerable influence over the development of Islamic politics and society” (Elias, 1998, p. 595). Aslan (2005) argued that Sufism as a religious movement is

like an empty caldron into which have been poured the principles of Christian monasticism and Hindu asceticism, along with a sprinkling of Buddhist and Tantric thought, a touch of Islamic Gnosticisms and Neoplatonism, and finally, a few elements of Shi’ism, Manichaeism, and Central Asian Shamanism. (p. 199)

Sufism is defined as an inward path of union, “which complements the *shari’ah* or outward law namely exoterism, the formal clothing of religion ... it is the perception of the supra formal essence which is seen by the eye of the heart” (Glasse, 2008, p. 500).

Sufis believe that by removing limitations from the understanding of Islam and its testimony of faith the “dividing line between world (manifestation) and Reality (God)” can be pushed back until “nothing but God remains” (Glasse, 2008, p. 500). For Sufis esoteric knowledge, according to Glasse (2008), is likened to a kernel (*lubb*), which is the essence, the intrinsic truth that “resides at the center of the circle of knowledge at the same time contains the circle itself. The radius from circumference to center the Sufis spiritual path (*tariqah*)” (p. 500).

Throughout Islamic history, Sufism has been grouped into different *turiq* (*tariqa*, sing.), or paths, which are a “congregation formed around a master, meeting for spiritual sessions in a specific place called *majlis* ... with the great Master, the true Master, is none other than the Prophet himself” (Glasse, 2008, p. 499). A Master is a spiritual master who is selected from the *Umma* (community) to “pursue the path of self-

purification and inner enlightenment” (Aslan, 2005, p. 199). Aslan noted that these masters learned from earlier legendary masters and attained “a level of spiritual maturity”, then taking the lead in transmitting their master’s words to their pupils. Furthermore, Aslan (2005) argued that “Sufism’s goal is to thrust humanity toward God” whereas Islam and other religions “can only claim to point humanity to God” (p. 201). Sufis believe that this occurs only through “spiritual poverty” which means “emptying the soul of the ego’s false reality so that one makes way for what God wills for the soul” (Glasse, 2008, p. 501).

Some early Sufis include: Abd-al-Vahed B.Zayd (d. 177/793) from the school of Hasan al-Basri (d. 110/728), Abu Hamza Korasani (d. 290/903) who studied with famous masters such as Nakhshabi, and Abdak al-Sufi who achieved mythical status for his extreme asceticism and vegetarianism (Elias, 1998, p. 596). Early Sufis, as Aslan (2005) argued, were highly mobile individuals who traveled throughout Muslim lands “seeking intimate knowledge of God” (p. 199). Some of them, such as Ibn Arabi; Jalal ad-Din ar-Rumi; and al-Ghazali; left behind writings, oral teachings, and Sufi poems describing the Sufi doctrine in great depth. One of these poems is the *Language of the Birds* by Farid ad-Din Attar, in which the birds (souls) set out on a journey to find their king (God) (Glasse, 2008, p. 500).

The belief in and study of Sufism is, currently, widespread in Turkey, Iran, India, North African and Sahara, amongst other places.

Empirical Research

This section reviews the literature related to international student enrollment in higher education, in general, with a special focus on international Muslim students' experiences at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

International Student Enrollment

The Institute of International Education (IIE), an independent non-profit American institution and one of the world's largest educational and training organizations, has been publishing annual reports about international student enrollment in higher education in the United States, since the late 1940s. For the purpose of this study, the literature review will concentrate on relevant research performed within the last 10-15 years.

The number of international students enrolled in U.S. institutions of higher education was estimated to be 481,280 in 1997/1998, with an increase of 5.1% over the previous year. Statistics showed annual increases with the number of students enrolled reaching a total of 586,323 in 2002/2003. In the following three consecutive years, as a result of the September 11, 2001 attacks and complicated visa procedures, the number of international students declined to 572,509; 565,039; and 546,766 in 2003/2004, 2004/2005, and 2005/2006, respectively. The number of international graduate students accordingly decreased to 247,310; 264,410, and 259, 717 in 2003/2004, 2004/2005, and 2005/2006, respectively. However, the overall enrollment numbers increased for the following years to 264,288 and 276,842, in 2006/2007 and 2007/2008, respectively. In addition, 671,616 international students were enrolled in higher education in 2008/2009,

an increase of 8%. Judith A. McHale, Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, expressed her delight, in 2009, at this increase, “I am delighted to see the large increase in the number of international students who are choosing to study in the United States” (Open Doors: Report on record numbers of international students in U.S. higher education, 2009). International students not only make a contribution to U.S. society, as a result of their diverse cultures, but they also contribute to its economy. According to the Institute of International Education in 2009, international students contributed by \$17.8 billion dollars to the U.S. economy through their expenditures on tuition and living expenses (Open doors: Report on record numbers on international students in U.S. higher education, 2009).

International students in the United States represent more than 180 countries around the world; they are a diverse body of students from different cultures, ethnic groups, and historical backgrounds, associated with a variety of religions and beliefs. The large number of international students in American institutions of higher education affords great opportunities for intercultural communication for both international students and their hosting communities, to learn “new and different approaches to life, ways of thinking, and governance” (Chin, 2006, p.1). Chin (2006) noted that it is only when “we are able to develop an understanding of others and we can appreciate our differences will we be able to have civil dialogue and work together on the world problems of tomorrow” (p. 1). Research studies have investigated a variety of international students’ concerns including academic, social, and visa policy issues.

One of these research areas involves an examination of international students' academic/non-academic socialization experiences and the factors that influence international students' satisfaction in regard to their relationship with the hosting community, classroom diversity, and cultural adjustment (Constantine, Anderson, Berkel, Caldwell, & Utsey, 2005; Morita, 2009; Thompson & Thompson, 1996; Yeh & Inose, 2003). Yeh and Inose (2003) examined international graduate and undergraduate students' acculturative distress experiences, and explored the effects of age, gender, reported English fluency, social support satisfaction and social connectedness, and found that socially-connected students were less likely to experience acculturative distress. Thompson and Thompson (1996) examined the behaviors that undermine the academic success of international students, and categorized the behaviors into two different areas. The first category addressed the areas involving the most difficult adjustments, such as social isolation, language skills, oral presentation assignments, knowing the norms and rules and regulations, overcoming stereotypes, and issues concerning transportation, weather, clothing, food, and personal finance. The other category addressed international students' inappropriate coping behaviors, such as their reduced class participation, not asking for clarification on assignments, socializing only with international students, studying only with international students, and breaches of ethical standards of scholarship.

Constantine et al. (2005) examined the cultural adjustment of African international students and identified seven themes related to the student's cultural adjustment experiences that included: pre-sojourn and post-sojourn in the United States,

responses to prejudicial or discriminatory treatment, family and friendship networks, strategies for coping, and openness to seeking counseling services. Morita (2009) investigated the adjustment of international students to Canadian society in relation to language, culture, gender, and gender in the academic socialization experience. The researcher concluded that language was a significant obstacle; language in this context refers to the participants' ability to communicate successfully in his/her academic setting. At the academic cultural level, the researcher distinguished three types of coping mechanisms for: the general educational culture of Canadian graduate school, the local disciplinary culture of his/her department, and the classroom culture. Morita (2009) asserted that being an international student means that the student is a member of a minority group, and this is an important factor that hinders their academic socialization.

A second research area examines the issues that international students have with cultural stereotypes and discriminatory acts (Lee & Rice, 2007; Spencer-Rodgers, 2001). Spencer-Rodgers (2001) surveyed 100 participants about their stereotypical beliefs concerning international students and found that there is a consensual, international student stereotype that is held by American students. International students were categorized as a group, mainly by a single unifying dimension: their foreign status. Lee and Rice (2007) examined the perceptions of discrimination held by international students, and discovered that the difficulties that international students' encounter include the perception of unfairness, inhospitality, cultural intolerance, and confrontation. The researchers also noted that some of the serious challenges for international students were due to inadequacies within their host communities. In

addition, Kaufman (2006) conducted a research study investigating non-native, English speaking international graduate students' attitudes about violence and racism; he found that non-native, English speaking international graduate students experienced different forms of racism and discrimination both on and off-campus.

A third research area concerns international students' graduate and post-graduate experiences, such as their perspectives on cross-cultural adaptation, cross-cultural education, and challenges in fostering cross-cultural interactions, and exploring Ph.D. students' perspectives on their host and home universities and a comparison of the perceptions of international graduate students and host country citizens regarding factors leading to success in international assignments (Lewthwaite, 1996; Robinson-Pat, 2009; Rose-Redwood, 2010; Sanchez-Ku, 2003; Wang, 2004). Lewthwaite (1996) examined the adaptation of international students' to their new academic/non-academic environment in New-Zealand. He found that the greatest barrier to adaptation was a lack of intercultural communicative competence, in contrast to the extant literature that reported the following as factors: cultural-shock, cross-cultural transitions, high levels of stress, frustration, depression, and the lack of deep integration with the host community culture. Wang (2004) distinguished three challenges for international students in adjusting to their new culture: financial concerns, emotional conflicts, and huge academic pressures. On the other hand, his study also revealed that international students are determined, persevere, are highly motivated, and are goal achievers.

Rose-Redwood (2010) investigated international graduate students' perceptions of diversity as a factor that influences their social interactions and identified five areas

for further consideration: imbalances in structural diversity, university-sponsored cultural events at the student union, services offered by the international students' office, nationality clubs as facilitators of social segregation, and promotion of social interaction in academic departments and by American university faculty. Robinson-Pat (2009) examined international Ph.D. students' understanding of, and responses to, the academic cultural differences between their home and host universities, in the UK, and the manner in which they might re-adjust to their home universities after returning home. He found that some graduate students considered academic and educational research as strategic points of change; others saw themselves as change agents.

Sanchez-Ku (2003) conducted a study that compared the perceptions of international graduate students and host country citizens in regard to factors that contribute to the success of students in international assignments. She examined 195 international graduate students, 93 host-country co-workers and graduate students, and 83 host-country supervisors, faculty and staff. One of the interesting results that Sanchez-Ku found was that international graduate students consider job knowledge and motivation to be more important factors in expatriate success than relationships with host country nationals.

International Muslim Students

Research on International Muslim students addresses several different areas and problems that students encounter during their study programs, such as communicating their Muslim identity in U.S. universities, socialization of Middle Eastern graduate students, perceptions of social interactions, cultural experiences of Arab Muslim

graduate students, dynamics of cross-cultural learning, perceived problems of Muslim students, and the public image and perception of Muslim students in the U.S. (Bavifard, 2008; Brown, 2009; Halawah, 1996; Johnson, 2004; Luna, 1993; Mohamed, 1992; Pinkerton, 2006; Schatz, 2008). Schatz (2008) examined the role of universities as organizational cultural sites in shaping the experiences of international Muslim students. The researcher noted that international Muslim students' university experiences are an important cultural register for their identity as Muslims, and those experiences become sites of "dilemmatic communication" that shape the perceptions of international Muslim students as the Other. The study revealed several communication dilemmas that demonstrated the concepts of "U.S. and/ vs. Them."

Luna (1993) examined a different array of perceived social problems for international Muslim students in the San Francisco Bay Area. She found that most of these problems could be categorized into one of four areas: social, financial, academic, and/or language adjustment. Johnson (2004) further investigated the socialization experiences of visiting Middle Eastern master's level graduate students in adjusting to U.S. culture, both academically and professionally. He found that international Middle Eastern Muslim students associate primarily in close-knit Muslim communities where Islam serves as the one strong unifying factor, the presence and experiences of previous colleagues of fellow nationals are important factors in orienting new students to U.S. campuses and communities, and, finally, the participants were shocked and displayed sadness about the 9/11 attacks on the U.S.

In 1996, Halawah pointed out that international Muslim students' intellectual development and personal growth can be predicted from social interactions predictor variables, such as academic integration, peer relations, social integration, informal faculty relations, and other factors. Mohamed (1992) investigated the dynamics of cross-culture learning and its impact on international graduate students' children in the U.S., during their parents graduate study programs. He found that the children of international Muslim students devised their own strategies to adjust to and then fit in to the dominant culture, in addition to showing awareness and concern for their own traditional values.

Mary Kathryn Pinkerton (2006) investigated the perceptions of international students from predominantly Muslim nations in regard to the U.S. public image. She found that the participants perceived America as being the "Everest" of nations, at the very top, and that studying in the United States was like a dream come true to them. Also, America was perceived as being an ethical nation with a standardized system of law, and Americans were perceived as being honest, open and friendly, but as lacking the ability to connect with community, family and friends in a more in-depth manner.

Mostafa (2006) examined the experiences of Arab Muslim graduate students in a Canadian university. His study revealed that students' adjustment to Canadian society is facilitated by their interaction with local Muslim communities and organizations/mosques. In addition, the researcher found that the multicultural nature of Canadian society was an asset; moreover, the presence of Arab Muslim students was another positive factor that facilitated the participants' adjustment. Brown (2009) examined the adjustment experiences of a group of postgraduate international Muslim

students in the South of England and discovered that friendly relations between international Muslim students, with Islam as a shared faith, was a major factor in the student's adjustment to their new environment. Bavifard (2008) investigated the perceptions and experiences of Iranian college students in a post-9/11 context and concluded that Iranian students experience cultural marginalization and fear of American peer reaction to their Iranian national origin, but they also realize that they must be able to cope with these circumstances in order to obtain their degrees.

The literature also encompassed research about Muslim women and investigated their experiences in school settings, the challenges they face on college campuses as veiled women, and their experiences as Arab-Muslim females studying the U.S. (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003; Gunel, 2007; McDermott-Levy, 2008). Gunel (2007) investigated Muslim girls' experiences in schools and how they negotiate their cultural identities. The researcher examined the experiences of immigrant-refugee Muslim girls, along with social studies teachers, as participants. She found that the social studies classroom was perceived as a safe and comfortable educational environment, and there was better engagement in classes with a relevant curriculum that connected the students with issues of culture, race, religion, and/or status as immigrants that concerned them. The Muslim girls felt uncomfortable among their American peers and teachers, while they described the ESL classroom as "home". Cole and Ahmadi (2003) examined veiled international Muslim women students' experiences on college campuses. They discovered that veiled Muslim women are perceived as being good Muslims, Muslim women's identity is closely related to veiling, stereotypes and misconceptions about veiled/unveiled Muslim

women are factors for further consideration, social reinforcement may impact women's decisions in regard to veiling, veiling is strongly associated with modesty, and veiling is a religious obligation. McDermott-Levey (2008) examined the experiences of seventeen Omani Muslim women nurses in a U.S. university and found that the participants were able to continue their religious and cultural practices in their new environment; they experienced anti-Muslim sentiment; they learned to view the world in a different way; and they experienced what it was like to belong to a minority group. The findings also showed that the Omani women grew personally and professionally during their study program in the U.S.

Discussion and Gaps in the Literature

In conclusion, the literature review revealed that international Muslim students face multi-level challenges during their study programs in the U.S.; these range from academic challenges to socialization and communication problems, both on and off campus, and misunderstanding and negative stereotypes about Islam and Muslims. The findings of previous research studies indicate that international Muslim graduate and undergraduate students' experiences in the U.S. have been examined in relation to the impact of the new culture on the students, as sojourners in the U.S. The literature review also indicated that little prior research has been conducted on international Muslim students' experiences in the U.S. after 9/11. More importantly, there is a dearth of research examining international Muslim graduate students' experiences, in particular.

To validate the significance of this study and its purpose, it is important to examine international Muslim graduate students' perceptions and experiences in the

U.S.: as cultural agents of peace between the Muslim World and the U.S and in terms of their empowerment by the American institutions of higher education that they attend,

it is all about knowing others and how that getting to know is informed by the subject position we assumed the other inhabits ... often this knowing of others is shaped by race, class, gender and sexuality discourses...also influenced by historical, social and cultural knowledge. (Cary, 2006, p. 3)

Therefore, in this study the researcher attempted to address the gap in the literature pertaining to international Muslim graduate students' perceptions and experiences of their al-rihla as cultural agents of peace, and to compare these experiences with those of three Medieval Muslim travelers.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on the methodology used in this research study. Data were collected from three different sources. First, the researcher's auto-ethnographic account in the form of three short stories was analyzed using narrative analysis. Second, a set of interviews with seven IMGS, enrolled in either master's or Ph.D. programs at a southwestern university, were conducted. The data were transcribed and then analyzed using the content analysis method of qualitative research. Third, and finally, the auto-ethnographic accounts of three, famous Medieval Muslim Travelers (MMT) who lived during the 11th-13th centuries were selected and analyzed using narrative analysis.

The methodology used in this chapter was interpretive and explanatory in order to present and analyze the experiences of a group of participants in a specific context. No generalizations were made. The study reflected the experiences of the researcher, as a member of the IMGS, as well as those of other IMGS.

Naturalistic Paradigm

A naturalistic paradigm was chosen for this study because it proposes a "contextual relevance" (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 235) incomparable to any other paradigm and demonstrates a "sensitivity to process" (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 235); the naturalist, then, cultivates a theory to explain the data, and finally, implements the "power of the human-as-instrument" (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 235).

According to Guba and Lincoln (1982), a naturalistic paradigm is a "paradigm of inquiry, a pattern or model for how inquiry may be conducted" (p. 233). In addition, a

naturalistic paradigm is built on five axioms that may be found in this study. The first axiom is as follows, “there are multiple constructed realities that can be studied only holistically” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37). This concept fits into my study through a holistic approach to the multiplicity of Muslim travelers’ experiences of al-rihla. Through the researcher’s auto-ethnographic al-rihla account, IMGS’s experiences, and the MMT experiences, the study not only explores but will also interrelate all parts of the study, as “the study of one part necessarily influences all other parts” (Guba, 1982, p. 75).

The second axiom states that the relationship between the knower and known is interactive and inseparable, “inquirer and the respondent are interrelated, with one influencing the other” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 75), “the inquirer and the object of inquiry interact to influence one another” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 37). In this study, both the researcher and participants influenced each other, with the researcher showing interest in the participant’s real-life experiences. Interaction between the two groups had previously occurred, since both are members of a small Muslim community in the setting of this study.

The third axiom is that generalization is time and context bound, and “generalizations are not possible, that at best what one can hope for are working hypotheses that relate to a particular context” (Guba, 1982, p. 77). In this study, the experiences of eight IMGS, including the researcher in her auto-biographic account, attending a research-intensive southwestern U.S. university are presented and cannot be generalized to represent all other IMGS experiences in the U.S.

The fourth axiom is the possibility that causal linkages between cause and effect exist in a relational state, and “in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 38). In this study, causes and effects occurred in a non-linear pattern with mutual influences. The idea of causality has gone through three stages: “the push-pull model, the more elaborate probabilistic model that includes the idea of feedback, and the emergent model which includes feedback and feedforward” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 54).

The fifth, and last, axiom signifies the role of values in inquiry, in that values are bound to inquiry (axiology) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), and the relationship between inquirer and the object is interactive with mutual influences, since both are human, and the aim of a naturalistic inquiry is to produce an “ideographic body of knowledge” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 238), which is the aim of this research study.

Merriam (1998) pointed out that in an interpretive paradigm, regardless of whether it is called qualitative, naturalistic, field study, ethnographic, subjective, or grounded theory, “reality is not an object that can be discovered and measured but rather a construction of the human mind” (p. 48). This specifically fits into my study in regard to the manner in which the experiences of Muslim travelers throughout different historical periods of time may be brought together and interpreted to give us a better understanding of the nature of al-rihla. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that a naturalistic study is: (1) carried out in natural settings, “since context is so heavily implicated in meaning,” (p. 187), (2) the researcher is the human instrument, adaptive and flexible, (3) a purposive sampling provides multiple realities, and (4) inductive data are essential to

unravel many realities. My research fits Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria for qualitative research because all four of these characteristics may be found in this research study.

First, the study was carried out in a natural setting: the community where the researcher lived and the university that the participants and the researcher attended. The incidents in the researcher's auto-ethnographic account, in the form of three short stories, took place in the community and/or the university setting. And the individual interviews with the study participants took place on the university campus, in the library study rooms.

Second, purposive sampling "increases the scope or range of data exposed" on the contrary to random sampling that may "suppress the full array of multiple realities" (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 40). The IMGS at the university were selected purposefully because they presented multiple realities that helped the researcher "discover, understand, and gain insight ... from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 1998, p. 60).

Third, in the in-depth interviews I, the researcher, was the *human instrument*, "capable of grasping and evaluating the meaning of that differential interaction ... and in a position to identify and take into account the resulting biases" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 39-40). I was flexible and responsive to my participants, in that I was able to grasp their words and ask for clarification and/or further elaboration. Thus I was able to evaluate my interaction with the participants.

Fourth, data were analyzed inductively. In inductive data analysis, the “investigator-respondent interaction is explicit, recognizable, and accountable” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 40).

Research Design

Naturalists enter the research field without a “priori theory or hypotheses, literally are unable to specify a design in advance, instead they anticipate that the design will emerge as the inquiry proceeds” (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 233). As a naturalistic study context is governed by time, place, and human interactions, the design implies, “planning for certain broad contingencies without indicating exactly what will be done in relation to each” (Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 67).

To design a naturalistic study is to plan to arrange a set of phenomena in order that the researcher, and others, can make sense out of them. This specifically describes my study, since I began this research without having a priori knowledge, hypothesis, or specific design for the study. But, instead, I had plans for site and purposive sample selection, data collection, data analysis, developing a logistic plan for the study, reviewing the research design, and finally disseminating the findings (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993).

The population for this study was the International Muslim Graduate Students (IMGS) at southwestern university. All participants were graduate students enrolled in either masters or Ph.D. programs at a southwestern university. The purposefully selected sample of participants included seven IMGS from different Muslim and non-Muslim countries, and from different graduate programs. The participants had been enrolled in

their study programs for 1-4 years prior to the time of conducting this study. The condition of selecting participants who had been enrolled for 1-4 years prior to this study was significant because the participants were asked to discuss their experiences of al-rihla in the U.S. in the university setting. It may be assumed that international students, in general, will need 1-2 semesters to learn to adjust, communicate, and interact with their host community both on and off-campus. Thus, the researcher assumed that a time slot of 1-4 years would be an ideal period of time for IMGS to have accumulated rich experiences to recount for the purpose of this study.

The research university in the southwestern U.S. utilized as the study setting has a diverse body of national and international students enrolled in both undergraduate and graduate level programs. According to the International Student Service (ISS) at this university, the number of international students in 2009 was estimated to be 4,556, with 3,646 students enrolled in graduate programs and 824 in undergraduate programs. The distribution of these students among seven countries and one category that encompasses all others is given in Table 1, in terms of percentage of the total.

Table 1. University International Student Enrollment

India	PR China	S Korea	Mexico	Taiwan	Turkey	Columbia	All Others
24.3	20.4	11.6	6.5	5.1	2.1	1.4	28.6

Note. This table presents the percentage distribution by country in fall 2009.

There are no specific university statistics or estimations of the number, or percentage, of IMGS at this southwestern university that are available from the ISS

Office. Instead, the number of international students, in general, from individual countries is available. In the fall of 2009, the estimated total number of students, in both graduate and undergraduate programs, from countries which are internationally assumed to be Muslim, who attended this southwestern university was estimated to be 470 (Bibinagar, 2009). However, since this estimate did not distinguish between graduate and undergraduate students, there was no accurate estimate of the population for this study.

Sampling, Sites, and Respondents

Purposive sampling was used to identify IMGS at this southwestern university from the Islamic Cultural Center in the city. The Islamic Center is owned and operated by the Islamic Community of the city and was opened in October 27, 1995. The center is within walking distance of the university campus and is housed in a two story building of approximately 6,900 sq. ft. The Islamic Center includes: separate prayer halls for men and women, office/conference rooms, a library, a nursery for infants and children, bathrooms and 'wudu' (abolution) areas for men and women, a guest room with an attached bath, and a small kitchenette. In addition to this, there are parking facilities on all sides of the building (<http://icbcs.org/islamic-center>, 2010).

A letter of recruitment for this study was posted on the bulletin board in the entrance to both sections (men and women) of the Islamic Center in March 2008 and remained there until August 2008. Also, a recruitment email was distributed via the center's listserv to both men and women. Since the researcher is a woman, she did not have access to the men's listserv; therefore, she contacted the President of the Muslim

Students Association at this southwestern university, via email, and requested his help in distributing the recruitment letter to the men's listserv.

The researcher received seven individual emails from male and female IMGS who were interested in participating in the study. Three respondents, consisting of two females and one male, asked for a short meeting with the researcher to obtain further information and discuss their decision for agreeing to the interview. The researcher responded to their requests and met with them individually on campus, in an open space, and answered their questions. Their questions varied from details about issues of confidentiality, the dimensions and objectives of the study, its population, and the nature of the information the researcher was looking for. After the meetings, the three participants confirmed their willingness to participate in the study and take part in the interviews.

All of the interviews took place on the southwestern university campus at the main Library Annex in individual study rooms. The researcher and each participant individually scheduled a face-to-face meeting for one hour at an assigned day and time. The researcher reserved a different study room for each interview and met with the participants accordingly. At the start of each interview, the researcher reminded the participants of their right to refuse to answer any questions and/or to terminate the interview. She also asked their permission to record the interview, noting that it would be a confidential interview and that only the interviewer would have access to the recorded tapes. In addition, the researcher promised to erase the records of their sessions after transcribing them or after the research was published. The interviewees agreed to

this procedure and the interview sessions were started, accordingly. At the end of each interview, the interviewer went over a brief check list with the participants before completing the sessions. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that the member check technique has several advantages, such as: 1) “it invites the respondent to react to ... the validity of the constructions the interviewer had made” (p. 271), 2) it enables the respondent to add and/or deny some materials, and 3) it provides a consent form allowing participants to go on record with quoted statements.

Purposive Sampling

A naturalistic researcher’s aim is not to generalize their findings but rather to “maximize discovery of the heterogeneous patterns and problems that occur in the particular context under study” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 82). Therefore, a naturalistic researcher will seek participants who can provide rich data and information for in-depth analysis to help him/her to better understand the problem under scrutiny. Purposive sampling also has no rules concerning sample size, as quality matters much more than quantity. A comprehensive and holistic analysis is the aim of the researcher which is best achieved through a small and carefully selected sample.

In collecting data from participants, purposive sampling is used as one of the techniques. Purposive sampling widens the range of data collection and, thus, expands the researcher’s opportunities to identify emerging themes in a study. The researcher has to make two decisions in this phase: “who and what to study, and who and what not to study” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 83).

Seven IMGS, four females and three males, participated in this study. The participants ages ranged between 25 and 39 years old, and they were enrolled in either a master's or doctoral study program at this southwestern university. They were all had different majors and from different Muslim and non-Muslim countries in the Middle-East, Central Asia, North Africa, Southeast Asia, and Oceania. Because the participants were of differing genders, ages, majors, and countries, the interviews provided different experiences and multiple realities. The participants were purposefully selected for the study because they were willing to share their stories and had already attended the university for 1-4 years. During the interviews, participants answered 14 semi-structured questions and shared their understanding of the concept of al-rihla in Islam, their experiences as IMGS in the U.S., and their stories that informed the study. The researcher's field notes from the interview sessions added another source of data to this study, and were included in analyzing the interview transcripts.

The intention of the researcher was to obtain a diverse sample of IMGS in various types of graduate programs (Master's or Ph.D.), with differing numbers of years in the program and in attending this southwestern university, of various nationalities, and of both genders, including covered (Muslim women who wear hair scarves) and non-covered Muslim females. The researcher was able to recruit such a diverse body of participants, with one exception: that all Muslim female participants were covered.

Instrumentation

The primary resource utilized in collecting data is the researcher her/himself, as the research instrument. In a naturalistic inquiry, the researcher as a human being is a

powerful and attentive data-collection tool because of “the understanding that all instruments interact with respondent and objects but that only the human instrument is capable of grasping and evaluating the meaning of the differential interaction and ... only the human is in a position to identify and take into account those resulting biases” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 39-40). Therefore, the researcher was the instrument for gathering data; I was flexible and responsive to my participants, able to grasp their words and ask for clarification and/or further elaboration, and able to adjust to their varied realities.

Introducing the Study to Respondents

The researcher contacted the IMGS as follows:

1. She posted a recruitment flyer on the bulletin board in the ICSBC in March 2008.
2. She sent emails to the ISCCB through the women’s listserv, and asked the President of the Muslim Student Association to send the flyer by email through the men’s listserv.
3. The recruitment emails were sent only once during the six months of the interview phase of the study. The researcher received two emails in reply from two female respondents in the first month, and one in the third month. The first interviews took place between March and April 2008 while the other four interviews took place between June and August of the same year. In sum, seven IMGS, four females and three males, responded to the recruitment materials and agreed to be interviewed for the study.

The intention of the researcher was to enlist more participants in the study to include a more diverse body of IMGS from different countries, but because of the situation of Muslims in the U.S. after 9/11, especially for international Muslims and IMGS, specifically, the study included only seven respondents, although the researcher herself knew more than twenty IMGS at that time.

Interview Questions

An interview guide (Appendix C) was developed in order to first frame general and then more specific questions for the participants in the preliminary phase of the study. Each participant was asked a set of 14 semi-structured questions. All participants received a copy of the interview guide questions via email two days prior to their interview, so they could decide whether to proceed with the interview or cancel it, and would have enough time to recall specific incidents and stories to share with the researcher.

Data Collection

During data collection, the researcher sought to collect data from different sources to ensure different insights were obtained about the same event/incident. Triangulation is one of the techniques used in data collection, in which interviews, observation, and the gathering of documents may be included. Triangulation enhances “meaning through multiple sources and provides for thick description of relevant information” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p.115).

Data for this study were obtained from three different resources: the auto-ethnographic account of the researcher, as a member of the IMGS community;

interviews with participants who are IMGS; and auto-ethnographic documents from MMT' travel accounts.

Auto-ethnographic Account

In this section, I will briefly reflect on my early interest in writing, by recounting a childhood event, and then discuss my writing style and the technique that I used in recording these three stories.

“This is my present to you. It will be your best friend and a lifelong companion,” my father said as he gave me a small red box. I opened the box to find a Parker pen with a golden case inside.

The time was decades ago, the place was my family's house, back home in Baghdad, and the occasion was my middle-school graduation. On that very night, I added a new page to my diaries; I wrote my first auto-biographical account in ink with a golden Parker pen. It was a narrative piece that expressed my gratitude to my father, and how it felt to have a golden Parker pen. I read the words I had just written, and wondered: “What magic lies in these words? How can “words” speak for us? How can words express our feelings? How can words reveal what is in our minds and inner souls? And how can words tell our stories?”

In 2005, I arrived in the U.S. to pursue a master's degree. I continued writing my diaries, but now they were in the form of short stories in a folder on my computer. No golden Parker pen anymore! My stories were about “me” and what happened at the moment I encountered the Other. I then decided to select three of my short stories as auto-ethnographic accounts, analyze them as narratives, and include them in my

dissertation. These three stories were the foundation of this research study and the first source of data collection.

Auto-ethnography is a form of self-narrative, a portrayal of the self in a social context (Burdell & Swadener, 1999; Humphreys, 2005; Spry, 2001) and a research method that blends the personal with the cultural, social, and political (Ellis, 2004). Ethnography is defined as “creative narratives shaped out of a writer’s personal experiences within a culture and addressed to academic and public audiences” (as cited in Patton, 2002, p. 9).

In postmodernism, the Self is viewed, “in terms of multiplicity of ironic and conflicting interdependent voices that can only be understood contextually, ironically, relationally, and politically” (Slattery, 2001, p. 374). Recent works in autoethnographic methods of research, “recognize the reflections and refractions of multiple selves in contexts” (Spry, 2001, p. 711). Auto ethnography is a method of representation of the self and the writing of “one’s subjective space as a kind of complex community, a site of shifting locations” (as cited in Pelious, 2003, p. 372). Autoethnography as a scientific research and an academic professional method is associated with risks, as Slattery (2001) cautions:

The risks they identify include gratuitous self – indulgence, the unreliability and inaccessibility of the unconscious, embarrassing self-exposure alienation from mainstream social science researchers and their grant money, ridicule among peers ... and lack of rigorous scientific standares to evaluate arts-bases autoethnography. (p. 384)

Autoethnographic texts are usually written in the first-person voice and in many different forms, including fiction, novels, short stories, poetry, and personal essays. Ellis

and Bochner (2000) detailed the variety of these written texts and noted that they are full of “concrete action, dialogue, emotion, embodiment, spirituality, and self-consciousness” (p. 739). Spry (2001) noted that a good and effective autoethnography is a well-crafted piece of writing that is emotionally engaging and a “provocative weave of story and theory” (p. 713).

Autobiography as a method of research inquiry and academic scholarship can be classified into three major types. The first is autobiographical theory and practice which includes such concepts as currere, dialogue journals, place, dreams, etc. The second may be characterized as feminist autobiography, and the third category includes teachers’ biographical and autobiographical works, which are efforts to understand the “personal practical knowledge” of teachers (Pinar et al., 2002, p. 516).

Different methodological strategies have been developed in which the researcher may focus on the “research process (graphy), culture (ethnos), or on self (auto)” (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 739). In addition, different ethnography methodologies, such as systematic sociological introspection, the biographical method, personal experiences, feminist’s methods, and autoethnographic performance can be implemented. In ethnography the focus is on the Self, as it blends with the cultural, political, and historical.

In my autoethnographic stories, I begin with the Self and move toward the Other. The physical movement in these stories reflects both the physical and symbolic experience. I then focus on the Self-Other interaction, and describe how communication begins, develops, and ends. I capture that very moment of a cultural encounter between

the Self and the Other as they meet physically and symbolically. Finally, I depict the manner in which the Self either merges with the Other or retreats.

According to Ellis and Bochner (2000); my ethnographic writing fit into two different categories of autoethnographic writing. The first is referred to as reflexive ethnography, in which the researcher's personal experiences form the core, as it "illuminates the culture under study" (p. 740). The authors noted that "reflexive ethnographers ideally use all their senses, their bodies, movement, feelings, and their whole being — they use the self to learn about the other" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 741). The second category is the evocative personal narrative, in which the ethnographer endeavors at "writing meaningfully and evocatively about topics that matter and may make a difference, to include sensory and emotional experience" (p. 742). In ethnographic writing it is common to utilize such overlapping styles, as the researcher may use a combination of two or more techniques to reflect his/her authentic voice.

The first set of data collected for this study was the researcher's auto-ethnographic account in the form of three short stories. The researcher has kept a journal, since her arrival in the U.S. in May 2005, in the form of short stories and diaries, as a type of reflection on her experiences in the U.S. The researcher selected three of her short stories to analyze and include in this study as the first source of data.

The three selected narratives recounted experiences the researcher had during her first two years in her study program in the U.S. and, in particular, at this southwestern university. The researcher selected these particular auto-narratives because each one of them recounts a different theme in her experiences, occurring both on and off campus.

Since the researcher identifies herself as an International Muslim Graduate Student and, thus, is a member of the IMGS body, her experiences form a significant part of the IMGS experiences at this southwestern university that inform this research study.

Interviews

Interviews are more than simply a question/answer dialogue. “Interviews allow respondents to move back and forth in time; to reconstruct the past, interpret the present, and predict the future” (Lincoln & Guba, as quoted in Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 85).

Data were collected from participants through interviews, because “we cannot observe behavior, feelings, or how people interpret the world around them. It is also necessary to interview when we are interested in past events that are impossible to replicate”

(Merriam, 1998, p. 72). Merriam (1998) argued that interviews are conversations that take place on the assumption that participants have “an experience worth talking about, and an opinion of interest to the researcher” (p. 84). Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that interviews are conducted for different purposes amongst which are “obtaining here-and-now constructions of persons, events, activities, organizations, feelings, motivations, claims, concerns, and other entities” (p. 268).

The researcher used open-ended, semi-structured questions that were revised throughout this phase of the research study. Interviewing proved to be a valuable source of data collection, as it “allows the researcher to move back and forth in time as he or she probes and asks questions appropriate to the respondents’ knowledge” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 94). Each interview lasted for one hour and was conducted with the participants, individually, in pre-reserved study rooms at the main library on the

university campus. Interviews were confidential and audio-taped after receiving the participants' consent, on the condition that they would be erased after the research study was published. Participants also agreed to allow the use of citations from their interview transcripts. Interviews were then transcribed and analyzed.

Documents

Documents “refer to the broad range of written and symbolic records, as well as any available materials and data” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 99). Documents may be categorized into primary and secondary sources for data collection. A primary document is “one that was generated from firsthand experience of a particular situation or event,” while a secondary document is one that is “generated from other sources” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 277). The researcher collected data from Arabic and Persian reports, and from the primary sources of the English translations of the original MMT' accounts. The use of documents as sources for data collection has been criticized historically as “possibly deliberately deceiving” but, “deception exists in any data source, and must always be considered” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 279). The researcher read and analyzed those accounts using the holistic content method of narrative analysis, and then selected specific excerpts and/or citations to support her arguments.

Medieval Muslim Travelers (MMT) Accounts

The researcher selected three MMT' accounts, recorded between the 11th-14th centuries, to study and analyze:

1. Abu Mo'in Hamid ad-Din Nasir ibn Khusraw al-Qubadiani or Nāsir Khusraw Qubādiyānī (1004-1088). Nasir Khusraw was a poet, philosopher, Islam'ili

(division of Shi'it Muslim) scholar and traveler, and although he was Persian, he was born in Bactria, Tajikistan and died in Yamagan. In addition, he is considered one of the great poets and writers of Persian literature; his travel account of conducting hajj lasted seven years and is known as *Safarnama*.

2. Abū al-Husayn Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Jubayr al-Kinānī, known as Ibn Jubayr (1145-1217), was from al-Andalus and was secretary to the Almohad governor of Granada (in present-day Spain). He embarked on a journey to conduct hajj in 1183 and returned to Granada in 1185: he performed hajj three times throughout his life, but recorded only one of them in the form of a book, known as *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*.
3. Abu Abdullah Muhammad Ibn Abdullah Al Lawati Al Tanji Ibn Battuta, known as Ibn Battuta (1304-1377), was from Tangier, Morocco and was one of the most famous travelers in world history. His journey lasted nearly 30 years, during which he conducted hajj six times. He was a Muslim scholar of the Sunni Maliki school of Muslim law and a judge, and was 21 years old when he embarked on his al-rihla, which covered almost the entire Islamic world at that time, including Northern and Western Africa, Southern and Eastern Europe, Asia, China, and other parts of the world. The book of his travels is known as *Al-Rihla*.

The researcher specifically selected these MMT and their accounts because: 1) their travel records are reliable sources that have been under scholarly examination and scrutiny for centuries, 2) the goal of all three MMT was to conduct hajj, although their underlying motivations differed, 3) their al-rihla for hajj was combined with a quest for

knowledge, 4) they were pioneer Muslim travelers, 5) their travel accounts were recorded during and after their travels, 6) their accounts are significant historical, geographical, and cultural records of a Medieval Muslim society that has/is still contributing to global historical, geographic, scientific, and cultural knowledge, 7) they were pious Muslim scholars; thus, their travel accounts combine religious and other sorts of knowledge, and 8) Ibn Jubayr's account, in particular, reflects a lively record of religious, Eastern Muslim/Christian and/or Muslim/non-Muslim, tolerance and co-existence in peaceful areas of Medieval Muslim society, despite the fact that it was during a time of war: the Crusades.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing is a technique that helps the investigator to step back from the current context and obtain another point of view. A disinterested professional peer can provide feedback and play the “devil’s advocate” in order to present another perspective that the researcher might not have been aware of during his/her immersion in the context. Peer debriefing is “a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). Lincoln and Guba (1985) also stated that peer debriefing helps: 1) keep the inquirer honest by exposing him/herself to a peer, 2) provide an opportunity to test the investigator’s hypotheses, 3) provide an opportunity for catharsis (p. 308).

A debriefer is a “noninvolved professional peer with whom the inquirer(s) can have a no-holds-barred conversation at periodic intervals” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p.

283). The peer debriefer who was selected for this study was a doctoral candidate in the final stages of finishing her dissertation. Her experience in qualitative research and knowledge and training in educational psychology, in addition to being a white American Muslim female who was a resident at the same city, made her the ideal debriefer for this study due to her proximity.

The debriefing sessions were established during the data analysis phase of this study. The researcher met with her debriefer face-to-face and in online sessions that involved discussions, conversations, and question-and-answer dialogues. Those sessions investigated the researcher's biases in the phase of data analysis and generated themes. The researcher and the debriefer kept separate reflexive journals, but prepared a joint final report for each session in the form of memos.

Confidentiality

It was important to establish confidentiality if participants were to share their stories and experiences freely. The following steps were adhered to to assure confidentiality: 1) each participant was given a number code, 2) any specific information that could identify the participant individually was excluded, and 3) any information that could identify the participants' nationality (for political reasons) was excluded.

Data Analysis

Two different methods were utilized to analyze the data collected for this research. The first was the method of narrative analysis, used to analyze the researcher's and the MMT' auto-ethnographic accounts, and the second was the content analysis method, used to analyze the interviews with the IMGS participants.

Narrative Analysis

My auto-ethnographic narratives are stories that lend themselves to the formation of a global impression evoking a strong sense of continuous disappointment resulting from a lack of acceptance by the Other culture. As a reader of my personal narratives, I see a continuity of cultural disconnection leaning more and more toward Self alienation. My three narratives are characterized by continuous attempts to positively interact with the Other. I narrate the Self as an individual and in relation to the Other, thus, the narratives reflect interpersonal as well as intrapersonal descriptions. The Other plays an important role in constructing my Self in these three narratives. According to Ochberg (1994), “the stories we tell about ourselves are shaped by our personalities and by the inter-subjective codes of our communities” (p. 116). I continuously tried to fit the Self into the new social construction and strived to avoid its “deculturation.” In my attempts to situate my Self in the new culture, while simultaneously adhering to my unique cultural identity and values, I recognized three overarching themes of “bridging the gaps,” “cultural identity,” and “appearance and reality.” The space and time devoted to these three themes differed according to the theme, plot, and the nature of each narrative.

Identified Themes

As I was proceeding with the analysis of my personal experience(s) according to the three abovementioned themes, I experienced a great deal of difficulty in examining my Self objectively. Accordingly, I decided to refer to myself in the three narratives using an Arabic female name, Nuha. I made no associations to Nuha, since I don’t know

anyone personally by that name. Doing this helped me develop a more critical eye toward analyzing my stories apart from my own subjectivity.

In narrative analysis, Riessman (2008) stated that the focus is on “what” is said and not on “how” and “to whom” or “for what purposes” it is said. In the preliminary reading stage, I realized that the method presented by Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Silber (1998) would inform me of the overarching themes that could be used for further analysis. During my reading of the three narratives I looked for emerging patterns in the form of foci throughout the narrative. I also searched for any repetitions, omissions, contradictions, or unfinished descriptions. I used color coding to mark the various themes in the narratives after reading each one separately and repeatedly. Through color coding, I was able to look at the three narratives, in general, to discern how much time and space were devoted to each theme. This method provided me with the information needed to excavate major themes in my three narratives in examining how I perceived the Self as a “cultural agent.”

Content Analysis

IMGS Interviews

Data analysis for the study was completed over several cycles; in each cycle the generated categories were read and examined and a new set of categories was developed. In naturalistic inquiries, data analysis is not separate from data collection, as “gathering data and analysis are complementary, ongoing, and often simultaneous processes” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 85). Thus, the researcher analyzed the data in an ongoing process, while simultaneously collecting additional data during the interview phase. The

preliminary data analysis resulted in the creation of 14 different categories and sub-categories. Data were analyzed by applying the content analysis method refined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Content analysis as a “systematic process” that “consists of a division of the text into units of meaning and a quantification of these units according to certain rules” (as cited in Guba & Lincoln, 1982, p. 337). Accordingly, data were unitized, categorized, and patterns were identified.

Unitizing Data

Data were broken into the smallest meaningful units. A unit may be defined as a few words, a sentence, many sentences, or a paragraph that has one idea in a “portion of content” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 117).

Coding

Glaser and Strauss suggested that coding could occur in any way that is convenient to the researcher and mentioned “marginal notes or entrees on index cards” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 341). The data units were printed out on index cards with pre-assigned codes to ensure confidentiality; each index card was given a number that only the researcher knew that corresponded to a particular interview participant. The number was followed by the abbreviation IMM, referring to both international and Medieval Muslims, the research topic, and then the year in which the interviews were conducted: 2008. On each index card, a number was written by hand in the bottom right hand corner; this referred to the number of the matching unit on the electronic version of the original transcript on the researcher’s personal computer. For instance, the code 2-

IMM2008, 16 refers to the second interviewee in the International Medieval Muslims research study and the unit is number 16 on the original transcript.

Categorizing Data

The researcher scanned the index cards for “recurrent regularities” (Patton, 1990, p. 403) that could be sorted into categories reflecting one specific theme.

Categorization “enables alternative constructions that the naturalistic researcher may consider as he or she seeks to construct realities” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 119).

According to Patton (1990), this categorization process demands careful judgments about “what is really significant and meaningful in the data” (p. 406). This phase of the data analysis included the following steps: 1) the researcher selected the first card from one of the card piles, read and examined it, and placed it in the first entry, 2) then another card was selected, read and examined, and, if the content was similar to the first card’s content, it was placed under the same entry or, if not, a new entry would be made, 3) this process was repeated until all cards were placed under specific entries, and 4) unrelated cards were placed in a miscellaneous entry. This process was repeated several times (rounds) until all cards had been examined. The resulting entries were given different names identifying particular linking characteristic and written on a separate card. Each card was put on top of its entry. The left cards, in the miscellaneous entry, were either grouped or discarded. Finally, the resulting categories were compared to identify themes and emerging patterns.

Identifying Themes

Themes were identified separately for each of the three sets of collected data. The themes generated in the researcher's auto-ethnographic account were linked with those of the IMGS, because both groups are IMGS and as a result of an overlap that occurred during the data analysis phase. These themes were then compared and contrasted with those that were generated in the analysis of data from MMT. Based on the data analysis and the contributions of the peer debriefer, the researcher identified relevant patterns and themes that recurred throughout the three sets of data.

Ensuring Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) discussed issues related to trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiry and asked: "how can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including one's self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of? What arguments can be mounted, what criteria invoked, what questions asked, that would be persuasive on this issue?" (p. 290). It may be argued that trustworthiness also includes the issue of transferability as the latter refers to "the extent to which the findings can be transferred to the settings or groups" (as cited in Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Trustworthiness is established by the use of different techniques that ensure credibility, applicability through transferability, consistency through dependability, and neutrality through conformability (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 132).

Credibility

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility is one of the most significant factors in establishing trustworthiness, "credibility deals with the question of how

congruent the findings are with reality” (Merriam, as quoted in Shenton, 2004, p. 64).

The researcher used several techniques in this study to assess credibility, such as prolonged engagement, triangulation, referential adequacy, peer debriefing, and reflexive journals.

To ensure credibility the researcher first conducted prolonged interviews with the participants that lasted for an hour or more. During these interviews the researcher took notes and, later, analyzed the collected data. Second, since there are four different kinds of triangulation: “sources, methods, investigators, and theories” (Denzin, as quoted in Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 305), the researcher used the data source, data collection methods, and theories as a triangulated approach to increase credibility. Data were collected from three different sources: the researcher’s autoethnographic account, interviews with IMGS, and MMT’ travel accounts. Three methods of data collection were used: the auto-ethnographic account, interviews, and documents. Finally, the researcher analyzed the data with reference to postmodern, postcolonial, cultural, and Islamic Studies. “In triangulation, a researcher deploys different methods — interviews, census data, documents, and the like-to validate findings” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1985, p. 963). Triangulation allows the researcher to develop several different constructions of reality, rather than one fixed reality, within the context under study. Third, through referential adequacy the researcher was able to collect enough material to provide a holistic point of view to the context under study. Additional material that is gathered, such as “videotapes, documents, photographs, and any other material that provide a

‘slice of life’ from the context under study” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 31) can provide support in naturalistic inquiries.

The fourth technique implemented by the researcher was peer debriefing which consisted of selecting a disinterested professional peer to provide feedback and play the role of “devil’s advocate”, in order to provide a perspective of which the researcher might not have been aware during his/her immersion in the context. Peer debriefing is “a process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session and for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). Lincoln and Guba added that peer debriefing: 1) helps keep the inquirer honest by exposing him/herself to a peer; 2) provides an opportunity to test the investigator’s hypotheses; and 3) provides an opportunity for catharsis (p. 308).

Finally, the researcher utilized a reflexive journal as another method to ensure the credibility of this study. Reflexive journals are a record of an investigator’s thoughts, reactions, schedule, and reasons for selecting and/or changing specific methodological decisions during a study. A reflexive journal not only “supports the credibility but also transferability, dependability, and confirmability of the study” (Lincoln & Guba, as quoted in Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 143); Lincoln and Guba (1985) discussed the separate components of a reflexive journal. The researcher and peer debriefer used reflexive journals after each session to provide a “methodological log in which methodological decisions and accompanying rationales” (p. 327) were recorded for further scrutiny. Both the researcher and debriefer reflected on their data analysis

sessions and the changes that the researcher made to the generated categories and themes. The researcher also added sections to her reflexive journal that documented changes in attitudes, perspectives, and emotions, all of which affected the data analysis.

Transferability

Transferability in a naturalistic inquiry differs essentially from external validity in a conventional inquiry. A successful inquiry is evaluated not only by its findings but also by how its findings can be applied to different contexts and/or participants. “An inquiry is judged in terms of the extent to which its findings can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 31). Because a naturalistic working hypothesis cannot be transferred to another context with the same time frame and context of the first setting, “the naturalist cannot satisfy the external validity of an inquiry; he or she can provide only the thick description necessary to enable someone interested in making the transfer” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 316). Although it is considered necessary for a thick description to provide a physical description of a site or location, in addition to a description of the people encountered there, some issues surrounding the use of thick description are “still not completely resolved” (Lincoln & Guba, as quoted in Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 147).

Dependability

Dependability is achieved when replicable evidence which results in the same findings using the same/similar context and the same/similar respondents can be provided (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 33). In this study, peer debriefing was implemented to increase dependability and peer debriefing sessions included conversations and

discussions. Some of these sessions were recorded on tape for in-depth analysis, while others were documented through memos and reflexive journals.

Confirmability

The confirmability of an inquiry “is judged in terms of the degree to which its findings are the product of the focus of its inquiry and not of the biases of the researcher” (Lincoln & Guba, as quoted in Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 35). Reflexive journals of both the researcher and the peer debriefer were included in this study to ensure confirmability and limit researcher bias.

Working Hypotheses

In a naturalistic inquiry, the “true generalization is that there is no generalization” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 125). Therefore, the researcher developed working hypotheses as the study proceeded, since her aim was to develop “a body of knowledge in the form of generalizations that are statements free from time or context” (Erlandson et al., 1993, p. 45). The researcher developed the following hypotheses as the work progressed:

- Most of the IMGS are very cautious about taking any responsibility for or playing any role in advancing a better understanding of their religion and culture, because of the critical situation of Muslims in the U.S. after 9/11.
- Most of the IMGS are more concerned with their personal goals, academic success and future careers, than playing the role of cultural agents for their countries and religion.

- Most of the IMGS realize the significance of their role and would like to do more, if their host community would take the initiative.

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter presents the findings of this study, based on data collected from three resources: first, the researcher's auto-ethnographic account, second, interviews with seven IMGS, and third, the al-rihla accounts of three MMT.

Data Presentation and Findings

Research Question 1

How does the auto-ethnographic account of the researcher enhance the understanding of al-rihla and relate to the experiences of Medieval Muslim travelers and other International Muslim Graduate Students in a research-intensive university in the southwestern U.S.?

In order to answer this question, I analyzed the three short stores in my auto-ethnographic account and identified three overarching themes using the narrative analysis. The following is a discussion of a personal strategy I developed in order to analyze my data as objectively as possible, the three narratives and their analyses, a list of the themes I found/identified, and a discussion section.

Personal Strategy

As I proceeded in the analysis of my personal experience(s) as presented in the three following narratives, I experienced some difficulty in examining my Self objectively. Accordingly, I decided to refer to myself in the analysis of the three narratives using the female Arabic name, Nuha. I have no associations with Nuha, since

I don't know anyone personally by that name, and doing this helped me develop a more critical eye in analyzing my stories apart from my own subjectivity.

In the following sections, I recount three narratives from my auto-ethnographic account. The three narratives are entitled: "Names and Titles", "Dates for Ramadan", and "Father's Day." The data presented in these narratives is analyzed in subsequent sections.

Autoethnographic Data Presentation

Names and Titles

I enter the classroom and take a seat, noting that several students are already in attendance. Then I take my books, notebook, a pencil and a pen out of my bag and put them on the table. I look at my watch, thinking "I still have 10 minutes before the start of class". Soon, other students begin to show up. "Hi, can I sit here?", a Korean female student asks while pointing to the seat next to me, and I reply, "yes, sure." I continue talking, "I am Methal, I am from Baghdad," and she replies, "I am Kim, I am from Taiwan." "Nice to meet you, Kim," I say and she replies, "Nice to meet you, Methal."

As I observe my classmates and future colleagues, I count four Korean students, two Mexican students, and one Indian student, and note that the rest of the class consists of American students. Soon, bottles of water and juice, cans of soda, and snacks and chips are laid out on the tables, along with a lot of books, notebooks, and personal laptops. But I have not put anything to drink or eat on my table!

An average-height man in his early sixties, holding a brown bag, enters the classroom. "It looks like he is the professor," I say to myself and wait to see if I am

correct. He walks in and takes a seat at the front of the rectangular-shaped tables. Then he puts his big black and white mug of coffee on the table, and takes his books, notes, and a pen out of his bag. He turns to the class and says, “Can you please close the door?” And the young man who sits nearest to the door leaves his seat to close the door. “Thank you,” the professor says while still observing the class. He studies us, gazing at one student after another; when he reaches me, he pauses, smiles, and nods his head. I smile and nod my head in return. Then he continues his scrutiny of the rest of the class until he reaches the last student, on his right. “Hi, looks like we have a large class this semester,” he says. Then he introduces himself, “I am professor X.Y.Z. You may call me Professor Z., Professor X., Dr. Z., Dr. X., or, simply, by my first name: X.” “What is this?” I say to myself. “How can I address this professor by his first name, without using a title?” Surprised and taken aback by his introduction, I ponder this occurrence for a few moments. I recall memories from earlier when I was back at home in Iraq, and say to myself, “different though similar!”

Dates for Ramadan

I dress in a hurry, put on my hair scarf, and walk quickly to the grocery store in hopes of finding some dates to break my fast with. It is one hour before *iftar* time, the fast-breaking meal for Muslims, in Ramadan, the month of fasting. It is the fifth day of my second Ramadan in the U.S. and I am in the Herbs and Natural Foods section at the grocery store. I ask an employee whether they have any dates today and he points out a box that has been put aside, and says, “Yes, we received this box today. It is the only box of dates.” I could not hide the big smile on my face and the joy and delight I felt in

my heart; finally, I will have some dates on my iftar table! I ask him whether I can pick out some dates with my bare fingers, and he replies, “Yes, ma’am, you can.” But while I am filling a small nylon bag with some dates, imagining myself eating them within the hour, I notice an elderly white woman staring at me. She approaches me and says, “You cannot use your bare fingers to pick up these dates. Your hands are full of germs and you will contaminate the whole box.” I look at her, seeing an elderly woman in her eighties, dressed in a gray and white outfit. Her gray hair and black glasses remind me of my mom, back home, though my mom is younger and has a slightly heavier build. I look at her, and reply, “I am sorry ma’am, but the worker told me that I can use my bare fingers.” She looks angrily at me, but does not reply, and does not leave the area either. I add a few more dates to my nylon bag and then close it; then I hurry to the checkout lane to pay for these precious dates, imagining them laid out on the small china dish that I use only during Ramadan. It is a magic dish; at iftar time, it takes me back home in my mind, seats me at the family dining table, and lets me see and hear my mom and sister. I can even see my sons and my nephew when they were young, playing, shouting, and competing to see who would sit at the head of the dining table. With my magic china dish, I can even smell the traditional Iraqi dishes of Ramadan.

Waiting in the checkout line at the grocery store, I realize there are only 20 minutes left before it is time to break my fast. But the cashier cannot find the product code for dates on his list and he asks another employee to go to the produce section and check the number for him; turning to me he says, “It will only be a few moments, ma’am,” and I reply, “oh, sure, thank you.” A few moments pass and the other worker

does not return; another five, and then ten minutes pass and, still, he has not returned. Now there are only a few minutes remaining before iftar time and I am very tired, thirsty, and hungry, but this is all right as long as I can have the dates for my iftar! At last, the worker returns, but with empty hands. He apologizes for his delay, and tells us that there is a problem with purchasing the dates. An elderly white woman is complaining about a lady with a hair scarf who filled a nylon bag with dates using her bare fingers. She is saying that the lady with the hair scarf must be charged for the whole box of dates, because she contaminated it!

I turn my face away, and can hardly lift my feet to walk out of the store. I feel so tired, like my legs are too weak to hold me up. "It is all right, Methal. No dates for the sixth day of Ramadan," I say to myself as I am leaving the store. Suddenly, someone runs after me, shouting, "I am sorry, ma'am. Please, here are your dates; you may pay for them now." Then I pay for my dates and walk out of the grocery store.

When I finally arrive at my apartment, it is half an hour after the fast breaking time. I put the dates in the china dish, and look at them. Then I sit at my dining table and slowly stretch out the fingers of my right hand to pick up one date. My cheeks are wet; my date also gets wet!

Father's Day

It is Saturday June 18, 2006 and I am visiting with a friend and her family to celebrate Father's Day. At first, when I first received my friend's invitation, it sounded strange, but I said to myself, "Well, there is a Mother's Day why not a Father's Day!" I

put on my jacket, hair scarf, and shoes, and pick up my handbag and sit down on the couch to wait for my friend to come and pick me up.

At her family's home, I meet her parents, two sisters and their boyfriends, and her grandmother. Everyone is so excited, "as soon as I heard that an Iraqi student was visiting my son's family I decided to come and join them. I have never met an Iraqi!" the grandmother says and sits next to me. She asks, "How long have you been here? How do you find the U.S.? Do you like it? Are you enjoying your time? Were you invited to visit with other American families?" I prepare myself for a long, lovely night of Q & A (questions and answers). One of the girls hesitantly asks, "Girls marry through arranged marriage in Iraq, right?" I listen to this and other questions that they have and then I say, "I am so glad you all are asking these questions". Then I turn to the rest of my friend's family members and say, "I will be glad to answer all of your questions. Please, don't hesitate." And then I begin with the grandmother's questions.

"Please, everyone, stop asking our guest questions. I bet she is tired now. Dinner is ready, so let's move to the dining room," my friend's mother says. We move to the dining room, my friend turns off the lights and lights the candles, and we stand in a circle, holding each other's hands, and then they start praying. After the prayers, we sit down at the dining table and we eat and chat.

"Would you like to drink your coffee in the living room?" my friend's mother asks. "Yes, please," I reply. My friend brings out mugs of coffee, and we all sit around in the living room. "Ok, it's presents time," my friend's mom says and everyone gives his/her present to "dad". Lots of hugs and kisses are given all around and this fills the

room with a lovely feeling of family and appreciation for my friend's father. We then sit down, sipping our coffee, and go back to the Q & A session. My hosts ask more questions, and I am delighted to answer; they ask questions about all kinds of things in Iraq. The young ladies ask about love, marriage and divorce, and clothing and the practice of hair covering; the men ask about politics and the Sunni/Shiat conflict. My friend's grandmother and mom ask about the Iraqi educational system, food and the preparation of dishes, and personal questions about my family, personal educational achievements, and profession.

When it is almost 10:00 pm, I pick up my handbag and look at my friend and say, "it was such a lovely evening, thank you all for inviting me to share this special day with you. Thank you for your hospitality and for the delicious dishes. It was a pleasure meeting you". I say this while standing up and shaking hands with my friend's family members and guests. When I get to her grandmother, while shaking her hand, she says, "It was a pleasure meeting you, too. To tell the truth, I never imagined I would meet such an educated Iraqi woman who is covered, but speaks wonderful English. Your English is excellent!" I think for a moment and then reply, "thank you ma'am. It was a pleasure meeting you."

Identified Themes

I identified three overarching themes in these three narratives: "Cultural Identity", "Bridging the Gaps", and "Appearance and Reality." The first theme, of cultural identity, manifests itself in different parts of the narratives. In the first narrative, Nuha reflects on her cultural norms in addressing professors in academia. She is

surprised at her professor's gesture of allowing his students to call him by his first name, *"I am professor X.Y.Z. You may call me Professor Z., Professor X., Dr. Z., Dr. X., or, simply, by my first name: X."* In Nuha's culture, one's title, be it academic, professional, or social, is an important component of one's cultural identity. And a person's title suggests a special social code that has its roots in the Arabic culture, and this reflects a special status quo that, in turn, stimulates specific cultural responses. These responses, mostly, elicit high levels of respect and appreciation for the titled individuals. In addition, sometimes the use of a title alone is sufficient to address a person. Older people, teachers and professors, high officials, and people with specific job titles, such as physicians, are addressed by their titles first and then by their first names. Moreover, in Nuha's culture, the Arabic and Islamic culture, teachers and professors have a high social status. Teachers are always given the titles, "Sit" (literally meaning 'female teacher') or "Ustath" (for male teachers). Nuha is surprised by this professor's gesture, and thinks, *"How can I address this professor by his first name, without using a title?"*

Another aspect of cultural identity reflected in Nuha's first narrative is that of eating and drinking in classrooms. In Nuha's culture, eating and drinking in classrooms is prohibited for students, and professors rarely drink in their classrooms. Nuha recalls, in one of her classes back home, that a professor was obligated to tell his students about his health condition; since he was diagnosed with diabetes and had to drink water during the lecture. Nuha completed her first semester at Texas A&M University without eating or drinking anything in any classrooms, *"I had nothing to drink or eat to put on my table!"*

The second theme, bridging the gaps, is represented through Nuha's friendly behavior in the first narrative with her Korean colleague, "*Hi, can I sit here,*" a Korean female student says and I reply, "*yes, sure.*" Furthermore, Nuha introduces herself and welcomes her colleague, "*I am Methal, I am from Baghdad,*" and the other student replies, "*I am Kim, I am from Taiwan.*" "*Nice to meet you, Kim,*" I say, and she replies, "*Nice to meet you, Methal.*" Communication and interaction between people from different cultures is a significant approach to bridging cultural gaps and obtaining a better understanding of the Other.

The third theme of appearance and reality manifests itself in different parts of Nuha's first narrative. In her interaction with the Asian female student, who said, "*Hi, can I sit here?*", Nuha originally thinks that her colleague is Korean, simply from her Asian facial features, but soon after this she learns that her colleague is, instead, Taiwanese, "*I am Kim, I am from Taiwan.*" Another example of this category is signified in Nuha's last statement, "*different though similar!*" Nuha's comment refers to the fact that in her experience up until that time, she perceives U.S. academia as being similar to that of Baghdad/Iraq, in terms of both being academic institutions, but different in terms of professors' self-reference and the usage of titles. American professors that she has observed, so far, do not appear to consider their job titles as an important component of their cultural identity, in comparison to their Iraqi counterparts.

The cultural identity theme manifests itself in Nuha's second narrative in the instance where the elderly white woman attacks Nuha verbally in an aggressive manner, while Nuha is picking up some dates with her bare fingers and putting them in her nylon

bag, *“You cannot use your bare fingers to pick up these dates. Your hands are full of germs and you will contaminate the whole box.”* In return, Nuha replies politely, *“I am sorry, ma’am, but the worker told me that I can use my bare fingers.”* Nuha’s reaction to this situation reflects her cultural and religious background, in which elderly people are forgiven for some behaviors on the assumption that these attacks are not racial, religious, ethnic, or personal in nature. This is especially true in public places and with elders who are strangers. A second example of the manifestation of Nuha’s cultural identity is in her delight at finding some dates in the grocery store, *“I could not hide the big smile on my face and the joy and delight that I felt in my heart. Finally, I will have some dates on my iftar table!”* Culturally, dates have strongly-rooted connotations for Nuha, as she is from Iraq, the country that was the top exporter, in the 1970s, of the best kinds of dates to the rest of the world. Dates and date palms are an essential aspect of Iraqi culture, agriculture, geography, and history, during both the past and present era. Date palms are planted, not only in fields and by houses, but in the streets in the Middle and South of Iraq. For Nuha, dates are a symbol of her religion, culture, and homeland.

The second theme, bridging the gaps, is evident in the second narrative in Nuha’s reply to the elderly white woman, *“I am sorry ma’am, but the worker told me that I can use my bare fingers.”* Nuha’s reply politely notified the elderly woman that she had the worker’s permission to pick up the dates with her bare fingers.

The third theme, of appearance and reality, is apparent in Nuha’s contemplation of the elderly white woman’s appearance that contradicts her behavior toward Nuha, *“I look at her, and see an elderly woman in her eighties, dressed in a gray and white outfit.*

Her gray hair and black glasses reminded me of my mom, back home, though my mom is younger and has a slightly heavier build.” While the image of a mother figure is assumed to bring forth feelings of love, caring, and safety, this was not the case for Nuha. Another example in this category is the instance where the elderly white woman uses the words “germs” and “contamination” in regard to Nuha. These words are derogatory in nature and, moreover, they hold serious connotations, associating Nuha with people who are ignorant or stupid. The elderly white woman judged Nuha’s level of education based only on her appearance as a “covered” Muslim woman, in the same manner that such women are portrayed in the Western and U.S. media, as being illiterate, ignorant, and passive women.

The theme of bridging the gaps manifested itself in different parts of Nuha’s third narrative. Nuha gladly accepts her friend’s invitation to join a family celebration, and, as a result, she interacts and communicates with the Other when the Other shows interest and takes an action in this regard, *“I am visiting a friend and her family to celebrate Father’s day.”* And although the occasion was unfamiliar to Nuha, *“Well, there is a Mother’s Day why not a Father’s Day!”*, she was willing to interact with her hosting community and learn about their culture by accepting her friend’s invitation. Another example of this category is evident in Nuha’s polite and welcoming response to her hosting family in answering all of their questions, *“I am so glad you all are asking these questions,”* and *I turn to the rest of my friend’s family and say, “I will be glad to answer all of your questions. Please, don’t hesitate.”* A third example is when Nuha happily accepts the host family tradition of praying together in a circle. Though Nuha is a

Muslim and her host family is Christian, she respectfully joins them in their collective prayer, “*we stand in a circle, holding each other’s hands, and then start praying.*”

The theme of appearance and reality is evident in the grandmother’s last statement to Nuha, as she reflects on her visit, “*To tell the truth, I never imagined I would meet such an educated Iraqi woman who is covered, but speaks wonderful English. Your English is excellent!*” By this comment, the grandmother demonstrates a Western and American attitude toward Muslim women, in general, and Arab Muslim women, in particular, that they are illiterate and backward. She is not only surprised by Nuha’s educational level and achievements, but also by her proficiency in the English language. As a language that is understood and spoken throughout the world, English proficiency has become a measure and evaluative tool by which the educational status of non-native English speakers, especially Arabs and Muslims, may be judged. However, though Nuha is surprised, she responds to the grandmother’s comment politely, “*thank you ma’am. It was a pleasure meeting you.*” This response from Nuha demonstrates her cultural identity as an Arab Muslim who shows respect to elderly people in such situations.

Discussion

In analyzing the narratives in my auto-ethnographic account, I sought to answer two questions: How did Nuha demonstrate her cultural identity in these three narratives? And, how did this analysis help me understand myself better?

Nuha presented herself as a cultural agent of her country, Iraq, to American citizens and other international students. She was a “good” intentioned, kind, and

friendly woman who was trying to reach out to Americans around her, both on and off campus. Shaped by her Arabic and Islamic cultural background, beliefs, traditions, and practices, Nuha displayed surprise, understanding and consideration of “differences”, and a willingness to achieve a mutual understanding of the Other. On some occasions she takes the initiative to reach out to the Other and gladly accepts the Other’s initiative to reach out to her. In addition, although at times she encountered hurtful situations of being misunderstood and/or misjudged, she upheld her cultural identity, religious beliefs, and personal character and behaved politely and respectfully.

Nuha’s personality and character traits are shaped by her culture and reflected in her tendency to communicate and interact with her colleagues and community. In addition, she attempted to depict the differences that exist between her culture and American culture. In each one of Nuha’s three narratives, Nuha reflects on a different aspect of her cultural identity. In her first narrative, she was an observant international student learning about American classroom culture and practices, and considering how these compared to Iraqi classroom culture; hence, her actions/reactions were limited. In Nuha’s second narrative, she reflected on her cultural identity as an Iraqi, Muslim, and Arab, through an examination of certain behaviors, actions, and reactions in a situation involving an elderly white woman. In her third narrative, Nuha reflected on a different aspect of her cultural identity: that of her social and interactive personality, when she gladly accepted her friend’s invitation to attend a family celebration. Through attendance at this event, she conveyed her willingness to participate in a two-way interaction of mutual learning and understanding of the Other.

As I, Methal, remember the manner in which I revealed my cultural identity in each of the three narratives, to achieve a better understanding of my Self, I see myself as a cultural agent of my country, culture, and religion who was trying to bridge the cultural gaps between two different cultures, and sought to gain a mutual understanding of the Other.

Research Question 2

What insights do International Muslim Graduate Students at a research-intensive university in the southwestern U.S. provide about the nature of al-rihla, their experiences while attending a university in the U.S., and Muslim travel, in general, in qualitative interviews?

In order to answer this question, I interviewed seven international Muslim graduate students enrolled in master's and Ph.D. programs at this southwestern university. Some of the students were sponsored by their country's government, while others were sponsored by the Fulbright Program, and the remainder was self-supporting. The interview questions sought to elicit information that would enhance an understanding of IMGS' experiences of al-rihla, in seeking knowledge in the U.S. In the interviews, participants responded to a set of semi-structured guided questions (Appendix C).

Interview Data Presentation

The above mentioned questions led to a more in-depth analysis of the experiences of IMGS in seeking knowledge at a southwestern university during the spring and summer of 2008. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and coded, with

the coding resulting in a total of 820 units of information. Information from a given coding unit was designated by prefacing the unit number with the letter ‘C’; for example coding unit 667 was designated as C-667. The data were then sorted into major and minor categories, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Generated Categories of the Interview Study

Generated Categories
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The intrapersonal relationships category includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Religious perspectives ➤ Cultural awareness ➤ Appearance and reality ➤ Rediscovering one’s culture 2. The interpersonal relationships category includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Traveling ➤ Interaction and communication ➤ Islam and politics

Intrapersonal Category

Religious Perspectives

In the interviews, IMGS expressed their religious perspectives on the concept of al-rihla in seeking knowledge in Islam. Most of the students referred to the significance of seeking knowledge in Islam and the fact that Muslims are encouraged to travel to distant lands in search of knowledge, with reference to verses from the Qur’an and/or hadith. One student stated that, “knowledge [in Islam] is related to the first word in the Qur’an: Read (Recite)”(C-3), another student asserted that knowledge is highly respected in Islam and “Muslims are encouraged to seek knowledge where it is in the

world, and they are encouraged to bear the burden of traveling for it in what part it is” (C-2). A third student added that Muslims are encouraged to seek knowledge, “as long as it benefits human kind” (C-667). One of the students referred to the importance of seeking knowledge not only because it is encouraged but also because it is rewarded in Islam, “it [seeking knowledge] is really well rewarded in Islam” (C-666).

In their responses to the question on the concept of al-rihla in Islam, one student referred to hijra as the first form of al-rihla in Islam, “al-rihla [in Islam] started with the movement of the Prophet Mohammed when he left Mecca to Medina to spread Islam to all the nations in a peaceful way” (C-457). Another student stated that, “al-rihla is not only for joy but knowledge and joy as it is the travel to seek knowledge” (C-458). A third student emphasized that al-rihla in seeking knowledge, “is not only to gain knowledge but to be wise and treat people kindly”(C-465). An interesting response from one of the students stated that al-rihla for Muslims, in seeking knowledge, should take place outside of the Islamic world rather than inside it, as al-rihla is an opportunity to learn about other people and re-examine one’s own ideas and thoughts, “you can change your ideas ... and get a better understanding of other people ... it gives you a way of thinking about a society not within the Islamic world” (C-120).

Cultural Awareness

IMGS expressed differing levels of cultural awareness concerning American culture prior to their arrival in the U.S. Two students emphasized that they were aware of cultural differences due to their interaction with Americans and American culture back in their home countries,

I was in a privileged public school, middle and high, back home ... all my classes were in English, and you will be immersed in English, the culture in that school reflected the American culture though there were no American teachers ... we had a lot of Americans who were living at my home town ... I had a lot of American neighbors ... we had a good communication with American kids ... I think I am familiar with American culture (C-78).

Another student referred to his experience as a student in an international school in his home country, where he had the opportunity to learn about American culture through his communication with an American teacher, “from an American teacher I learned about his home town from Google and the TV, and through conversations with him ... and through normal gatherings through the school, though in a formal setting” (C-597).

Other students were unfamiliar with American culture prior to their arrival in the U.S., except for virtual experiences gained from different media sources. One student said, “I would say I was unfamiliar with American Culture,” (C-367) while another student commented that, “most of the sources I had are from geography books and from movies ... and I think this is not the good idea to know about American culture” (C-108).

Another student stated that her experience of living in Europe for a while, in addition to her brother’s experience of living in the U.S., was a great asset in helping her develop a cultural awareness about American culture, “I knew basically most of their [Americans] ways of thinking first because I was in Europe and I have my brother who lives here ... he told me much about it, I know a lot about Americans” (C-689). Another student commented that she was “familiar enough,” with American culture prior to her arrival in the U.S.,

I was thinking that I am familiar enough through watching American movies especially the “cowboys”... Also the programs like Oprah, I was a big fan of such programs through the TV and the Internet (C-502).

One of the students explained in detail how his familiarity with American culture was influenced by his home country’s policy toward the United States and how openness to the U.S. helped him become more familiar with American culture,

Before 2000, we [his country] did not have a lot of opportunities between my country and the U.S., I did not have a lot of interaction with them. They opened developed centers in my country, I went to them, they offered English courses and courses about American culture ... my opinion was based on stereotypes I saw on Media about the States, but my first impression be ... I felt it is not the same U.S., I think it is mainly perhaps Hollywood ... I imagined all ... tall buildings everywhere in all of the cities ... but found that many places here are like places in my home country (C-643).

One of the students shared a different vision on the topic of his familiarity with American culture and society, with the focus being on individualism versus collectivism as two distinctive social aspects of American versus Islamic culture,

... here people are more like individually oriented like, back home we always are concerned about the family, we say WE, actually this ... was very different like paradoxical, at home we say WE did this, here they say I did this and that ... Americans are encouraged to let others know what they did ... but back home it is at least not polite to talk about what you did [show off you self] (C-717).

Appearance and Reality

This category recurred throughout the IMGS’ experiences of al-rihla, manifested in several different ways in their answers to the interview questions. One student recounted her experience of al-rihla while performing hajj/umra, and noted that people should be judged based on a deeper understanding of their real intentions, rather than on our, often, superficial interpretations,

In Umara, I was getting water from Zamzam [a historical/holy water well for pilgrims since the time of Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh)], and I had to get my water in a 5L bottle, and I was in a hurry and wanted to catch the next prayer ... there was a guy in the lane behind me with a smaller bottle 1L of water who wanted to also fill it out. I realized he was trying to cut in front of me to get to Zamzam though there are other water taps to get water from ... I really did not let him though he was trying ... I was using a small glass to fill my bottle ... I felt so bad but I said all right we are in umra and I have to be nice, so let him fill his bottle. He was trying to tell me something ... but I did not understand it ... then I let him fill his bottle before me, and guess what he did? ... he poured his bottle into my bottle, he was trying to help me but I did not understand him (C-231)!

Another student referred to her experience in learning about American culture as it relates to family relationships. In this student's national culture, as well as in Islamic culture, remaining close to family members and relatives, in both close and extended relationships, is mandatory and Muslims are rewarded for any deeds in this regard, such as visiting relatives in distant places or helping them financially. Based on her cultural experience, this student was surprised by the distant relationships that exist between relatives in the U.S., in comparison to that of her home country,

Their [Americans] relationship with their relatives is very distance, I can not believe it. Last Sunday I had breakfast with an American friend, she is a Muslim, she said if her uncles from her mother and father sides come together she would not know who is related to her mother and who to her father (C-277).

Another student reflected on her experience at a conference she attended with some faculty members where they expressed their admiration of her courage to live by herself in the U.S., far away from her family or any relatives, for the sake of pursuing knowledge,

They thought that Muslim women are submissive and accept anything because they are covered, and they think that we don't have a lot of saying ... and we can not reflect ourselves, and I said no I can say what I

want to say and I don't say things behind people, I say it in front of him/her (C-97).

One of the students reflected on his approach in introducing some aspects of his culture to Americans as they relate to Muslim women,

I think many Americans know few things about my culture and it is not the truth that represent my culture, I don't blame them because you really don't know where to go to get the truth about that culture ... for example they think all Muslim girls cover in my country and this is not true ... it [my culture] is very diverse there (C-349).

Rediscovering One's Own Culture

This category is evident throughout the IMGS' experiences. One student reflected on her experience of relationships between family members and relatives through her al-rihla experience, "I also want to admit that my country is getting less close relationship but not like here in the U.S. culture" (C-121). Another student referred to his experience as it related to religious tolerance in his country and the questioning of different religious aspects,

In my country as far as religious beliefs are concerned, if someone embraces other religion rather than Islam within a Muslim family, it is a huge thing, not tolerated at all ... I think this is an obstacle in our countries ... I would say, because if you don't question your religion you don't really try to seek knowledge ... but it is good to start question your religion, because if you don't question your religion, you don't really try to seek knowledge, but in my country they say it is Bud'a ... we learned from our parents and read hadith, we were told this religion and taught and not learned it, we were raised in this way, not questioning religious beliefs (669).

Another student reflected on her cultural experience of dealing with foreign students and/or foreign visitors in her home country in comparison to her experience of being a foreigner/international student in the U.S.,

Back home ... we welcome foreigners and regard them as guests in our countries ... and do our best to show them that we are happy to have them ... this is not only for Americans but for all visitors ... we have a completely different understanding to how one feels far away from home and how important it is to feel welcomed by others on their lands (C-561).

Another student reflected on her country's educational system in regard to age restrictions for students pursuing degrees, regardless of whether one is seeking a high school diploma or a college degree, in comparison to the "open doors" policy in the American educational system. She commented,

In my culture, people think that once you [women] married and get children your mind activity stops ... and you have to think only about your husband and children and stop the clock against any intellectual efforts or endeavors to improve yourself or gain new knowledge (C-780).

Interpersonal Relations

Traveling

This category was addressed by exploring IMGS' responses to various questions about al-rihla, al-rihla in seeking knowledge, and hajj as a different form of travel in Islam. One student noted the intrapersonal characteristics of al-rihla, "it is an opportunity to learn more about ourselves, our weaknesses and our strengths" (C-269). Another student reflected that al-rihla is, "like two sides, people learn through the journey, learn from the other and teach the other, learn how to change to the better" (C-670). Another student responded in terms of interaction and communication with other cultures, "in al-rihla I have become more appreciative to any opportunity of travel to learn, to meet, and to communicate with other people" (C-237). Another student emphasized that al-rihla plays a dual role in the learning process, "it is not only a scholarly learning process from

books and directly about things and people, but rather to gain wisdom through the process” (C-227).

On the subject of hajj as a religious obligation as well as a form of travel, one student described hajj as an inner self experience, “hajj is first of all a journey through one’s inner self ... face evil in your self ... everything in hajj is a step on the process of purification” (C-242). Another student focused on the goal of hajj as being a journey to repent our sins,

In my opinion, the rituals of hajj are meant to wash our souls from the worldly sins, and correct our mistakes, in order to repent, and to give us the chance to re-think of everything we had done so far ... to nurture the good in ourself and go back with a pure soul as a Muslim (C-263).

Another student emphasized the idea of the power of religion and how influential one’s beliefs must be to induce him/her to travel for thousands of miles to reach holy lands in following a religious obligation, “how religion is big in their lives, and may drive them miles of their home towns or cities to the middle of the desert which has no attraction but people go there for religious purposes” (C-124). Another student reflected on hajj as an opportunity to communicate with people from other cultures,

I think it is for Muslims from all around the world, people from all kinds and different cultures, you communicate, travel with them and pray with them ... there is a lot of communication for Muslims in hajj from different countries (C-11).

Interaction and Communication

This sub-category was manifested in several different forms. Some students reflected on their personal approach to interacting and communicating with Americans both on and off campus, but most of the students had limited interactions with

Americans. Some of the students preferred to interact with only a few colleagues on a personal level. One female student commented on her experience,

I think it was helpful in the beginning, I was going only with her [one American colleague] but then she started bringing her friends, and in that way I got to know more people and introduce my culture to more people (C-397).

Another student reflected on his experience, back in 2000, when he was enrolled in a master's program and sponsored on a Fulbright scholarship,

Many people [Americans] whom I met and talked to in the beginning of 2000 did not know much about my culture, most of them even did not know where my country is. I used to make jokes and ask them: do you know about other countries? They did not know this country or that and they laughed, sometimes I say Americans are not good in geography, it is understandable everyone knows about the U.S. but they don't know we know about Americans. I started talking about my culture (C-442).

Some students shared their experiences of interactions and communication with their host community, both on and off campus, and commented on Americans' responses.

One student remembered an opportunity that she and her friends from her country had to meet with American people, mostly women, in an informal setting on a weekly basis to introduce her culture and share some local dishes with her audience,

... off campus I have weekly meetings with American people it is a kind of getting together to American who have been to my country, but it has got so much that a lot of women are attending it ... so they may learn about our culture and about Islam ... they wanted to know about our family relationship, education, and home town ... (C-234).

Another student referred to his experience in introducing his culture to Americans as being "realistic" about presenting both the positive and negative aspects of his culture,

... they [Americans] don't ask because they think it is offensive ... I made OK and said it is not offensive, so they know it is OK to ask me ... I tried to tell them ... it [my society] is like any other society ... I don't

try to make things about Islamic society look like fancy but try to tell them about the positive and negative one so they won't be mis-led about anyone or about my society (C-313).

Another student reflected on her experience of interaction with her host community as, “Nothing ... through my relationships! How would I introduce my culture if there is no interaction? (C-79)”

Islam and Politics

One of the students reflected on the extent of most American's knowledge about his home country before and after 9/11,

I think before Sept. 11, Americans knew Zero about us, I am talking about my country, with the Zero knowledge ... after ... Sept. 11 ... I can say and through my relations with some American families and their children.... they knew something about my country ... this is a progress ... they don't know about the people and culture. After Sept.11, they have really the other perspective, a totally different perspective, completely different with the media they have, they have started a different knowledge, it goes to the bitter side (C-569).

Another student commented on her experience with faculty members at one of the conferences she attended, when she attempted to correct an erroneous misinterpretation of the term “jihad,”

An example is about “jihad” the word made them [faculty dinner] nervous and they talked about wars and weapons, and when I told them about the jihad with one's self, they did not believe it and they were surprised, they said is that what you are saying? I said no it is not my words this is the Prophet's words when he came from the war and talked about the big jihad with one's self (C-294).

Another student commented on her experience with American students, who looked at her and implicitly judged her based on her appearance as a Muslim lady with a hair cover,

I was kind of hiding because of the hijab I am wearing, when they see me they don't see me [as an individual] but see my clothes, see my hijab ... I was thinking the Americans will think I am a kind of "terrorist" (C-116).

Identified Themes

The researcher identified six common themes in the respondents' data with some individual differences in size and scope: great appreciation of knowledge, the seeking of knowledge, and al-rihla in seeking knowledge; a strong belief in al-rihla as a means to mutual understanding of the Other; caution, fear, and issues of "trust" in being a Muslim; giving priority to one's national culture; limited interaction with Americans; and interest in university and/or departmentally sponsored and/or administrative cultural activities.

Great Appreciation of Knowledge, the Seeking of Knowledge, and Al-Rihla in Seeking Knowledge

This theme was stated clearly in each one of the students' interviews. Students expressed their beliefs about and appreciation of learning and seeking knowledge based on the Qur'an and hadith. They also showed a special respect for books and authors as vehicles to spread knowledge,

During my process of my study in the graduate program he [a professor] mentioned his book as "damn book" as a joke, but I respect his book and his knowledge. I thought books are books that keep the knowledge; I thought how he could say "damn" on his own book ... I think knowledge is so much respected in Islam (C-67).

Students believed that their al-rihla in seeking knowledge, as a goal and a practice, would benefit their fellow citizens, "when you go back home you can help them [fellow

citizens] with your knowledge you have from your al-rihla” (C-619). Students referred to gaining wisdom as being the ultimate goal of al-rihla in seeking knowledge,

A wise Muslim father in the 6th or 7th century Islam advised his son not only to gain knowledge [in his al-rihla] but to be wise and treat people kindly and by the end he will get knowledge through them and with them (C-336).

All of the students discussed the terms “knowledge” and “seeking knowledge” in regard to their broader meanings, as a goal to attain and a means to benefit human kind, to communicate with other people, and to learn about other ways of thinking. Some students noted the difficulties that seekers of knowledge might face in their al-rihla but also noted that embarking on al-rihla is a challenge and a choice in itself, “actually the travel for seeking knowledge is a challenge and choice” (C-608).

Strong Belief in Al-Rihla as a Means to Mutual Understanding of the Other

All students stated that al-rihla should be approached and experienced as a means to a mutual understanding of the Other. Students had varied experiences in learning about American culture and teaching Americans about their own cultures. The number of opportunities for IMGS to learn about American culture was definitely greater than that for their counterparts to learn about different IMGS’ cultures. Since the IMGS spent 2-7 years in the U.S. while enrolled in their graduate programs, this, accordingly, provided them with unlimited opportunities to learn about Americans and American culture. Thus, the IMGS were immersed in American culture and exposed to everyday life situations and practices within their host community, both on and off campus. All IMGS confirmed that they learned a “whole lot” about Americans and American culture and described their cultural experiences as “enriching.” However, the IMGS referred to

their host communities as being “very limited”, in terms of the effort expended by members of the host community to learn about them, other IMGS, and their culture. Some of the IMGS admitted that they felt “guilty” because they did not put enough effort into introducing their culture to Americans, and they mentioned several factors that influenced their efforts to that end; such as time management, the negative impact of the media, a perception of lack of interest on the part of Americans, and limited activities on campus.

Time management was the first and foremost concern of IMGS when considering their interactions with Americans, especially since, as sponsored students, they were obligated to meet the requirements of their sponsoring agents in passing the classes in their programs and maintaining high GPAs; otherwise they were at risk of losing their scholarships. Thus, some IMGS devoted most of their time to their study programs which, accordingly, influenced the amount of time they had to participate in activities that were not academic in nature,

I could not participate in the on campus activities because of the time, I don't have enough time. But with the off campus it is through the week end. If I have time for the on campus events I could really participate if I can introduce my culture (C-138).

Another student commented on his experiences with time management when he was enrolled in his two different graduate programs,

When I did my master's I had more time, I was a sponsored student, I used to play in the MSC Muslim Student Association soccer team, and also like we organized our independency day [my country] but there was another 4-5 countries around us.... there was a lot of American students ... I had the chance to present and talk and highlight about my country ... while with the Ph.D. program ... I was so busy the first year ... I plan to do it maybe next year ... (C-788).

However, some students found good opportunities in off campus activities to interact with Americans from both on and off campus,

I should admit that I am kind of guilty because I have no much activities on campus but off campus I have weekly meetings with American people, it is a kind of getting together to Americans who have been to my country,, it has got so much that a lot of women are attending it ... all of us are Muslim [women] ... so they may learn about our culture and about Islam (C-291).

One female IMGS discussed her interactions with her host community, “we started communicating with them and they responded to us ... some of them are from the university, but others are people from the U.S. (C-313)”. She continued, recounting that she and her colleagues were admired for their courage, perseverance, and capability in living alone in a different culture while pursuing a graduate degree, “they admire that we [IMGS females] are living by ourselves, and say that they may not be capable of doing it, they may not leave this place ” (C-329).

Some students referred to the negative impact of the media in the U.S., and how it portrays Muslims, in general, as “bad” people,

The majority of them [Americans], they are ignorant of my culture, they don’t treat me in person but according to what they see in the media which shows a lot of false things that shape their misunderstanding about us, they don’t know real people but what the media shows them ... (C-683).

Another student also commented on the media and its negative influence on Americans, especially after 9/11, “... after 9/11 they have really the other perspective, a totally different perspective, completely different with the media they have started a different knowledge, it goes to the bitter side” (C-276).

In regard to the perception of a lack of interest on the part of American students in interacting and communicating with international students, IMGS recounted their experiences with American students and their understanding of different ways of thinking. One student reflected on his experience, “sometimes it is not easy to think because ... they [Americans] don’t ask ... because they think it is offensive [to ask], but I made it OK and not offensive, so they [Americans] know it is OK to ask me” (C-347). Some students found it easier to first communicate with one colleague, who would then introduce him/her to other American colleagues,

I had this American friend ... she visited my region twice so she already knows the real person in me, so she was good to me from the beginning ... but other people did not trust me from the beginning but after they knew me they become much better ... I see the change in their ways of treating me (C-386).

IMGS reflected on the university’s efforts in sponsoring cultural activities on campus that enhance learning about other cultures; such as the University Open House activities, sporting events, cultural festivals, and other activities. Most of the students stated that though these activities are good they are not enough to result in a better understanding about the Other and their cultures,

I think of more closer relationships, more understanding, a lot of culture, I think not just one presentation ... [you need] something to build on, create something continuous, like they can ask questions and get answers ... maybe a weekly activity ... it is better than an activity once a year (C-187).

Other IMGS discussed the benefit of attending a university with a large number of students from their country and emphasized that larger groups can arrange more activities, which will definitely have a greater impact on Americans,

... like Chinese festival on their new year, it is good, I don't know, if you come from big country it is possible to organize such thing but in my case we don't have a lot of people from my country ... we don't have a lot of students here (C-674).

The students also made some suggestions for expanding the scope and size of university cultural activities, so that American students might have more chances to communicate and interact effectively with the IMGS.

Caution, Fear, and Issues of “Trust” in Being a Muslim in the U.S.

IMGS reported the perception of a need for caution and experienced different levels of apprehensiveness that, at times, reached the level of fear, either as a result of their experiences or in participating in this research study as respondents. This was especially true for female IMGS who wear a hijab,

I was telling myself not to be afraid, be what you are, and then befriend them ... in my first year I was kind of hiding because of the hijab I am wearing, I was thinking the Americans will think I am a kind of “terrorist”... yesterday I was not afraid anymore and I walked by myself and said ... this is America ... I said just let me go ... and let people see me ... let them see who I am ... this is my identity ... I am a Muslim (C-169).

Another female IMGS commented on her experience,

The difficulty [in communicating with Americans] come from their little knowledge/sometimes ignorance about our culture ... when they see me they don't see me [as a person] but see my clothes, they see my hijab and think that person maybe a “terrorist” ... that was very difficult for me in the beginning but once they know me things changed ... they changed and now respect me more (C-456).

Misunderstanding of or misconduct toward Muslim women is, most of the time, due to a lack of knowledge about basic cultural practices in Islam and, more specifically, Muslim

women. One of the female IMGS shared her experience of the cultural/religious differences in man-woman relationships between American society and her society,

When I came here, I was the first covered Muslim female in my department, they gave me their hands to shake, I am from a country has a different relationship between men and women, we kind of have distance that we keep not not to talk to them ... I met with an American friend , she introduced me to her friend from Latin America, he wanted to shake hand with me but I did not accept it ... my American friend was shocked ... then told me she was surprised why not shaking hands with her male friend ... I don't shake hands with neither Muslim men nor European (C-257).

Three participants in this research study, two females and one male, stated concerns about the confidentiality of their information and issues of “trust” as confidential informants, as they were Muslims in post-9/11 U.S. The researcher gladly agreed to meet with those three participants individually prior to their interviews, to answer all of their questions about the nature of this study and its goals, and give more in-depth information about the researcher’s field of study; issues of confidentiality concerning their information and stories; names and positions of other researchers involved in this study, not solely the researcher and her advisor; and, finally, a statement confirming the erasure of the interview records after they have been transcribed.

Priority of National Culture

One of the most important aspects of Muslim societies that most Westerners and Americans are not aware of is that Islam, for Muslims, is a unifying religion rather than a unifying culture. Although some Islamic cultural practices are common to all Muslims, these practices all have a religious basis. For example, women and men do not shake hands, not because it is a cultural practice but, rather, a religious obligation, since only

spouses and first-degree relatives, such as parents, grand parents, brothers and sisters, and uncles and aunts are allowed to touch each other. And, although some Islamic schools of law and/or Muslim scholars accept handshaking between those who are not first-degree relatives, they don't encourage it.

Each Muslim country has its own unique culture and cultural practices which may or may not relate to a collective Islamic culture. One student from Turkey reflected,

I have weekly meeting with American people ... one of American women said why don't you prepared a kind of presentation about your country, family relationship, and other cultural aspects ... they liked the food and wanted to share with some dishes (C-288).

Another student from Saudi Arabia talked about his participation in university activities and presenting his country and culture,

Since I arrived here in 2005, there was the International Week, I never missed any of these weeks, I have been active and represented my country with other students ... we also have an international dinner at my department, so we meet and get together ... I conducted many presentations at the consult of the city, schools... out off campus I meet with American students from time to time for a barbeque, for range, and socialization (C-763).

Another student from Indonesia commented on her participation in university cultural events,

Last year I joined the cultural festival in the I-Week, I was one of the participants I danced with my group to introduce my country, in this year we also had International buffet so we introduced our food/cuisine (C-159).

A student from Uzbekistan reflected on his participation,

We [colleagues from my country] organized our independence day in 2003, we were only three students ... I had the chance to present and talk and highlight about my country ... there was a lot of American students (C-733).

Limited Interaction with Americans

The IMGS is a minority group among international students at this southwestern university. Though there were no exact statistics of the number of IMGS from the ISS, 150-200 were estimated to be enrolled in graduate programs at this southwestern university in 2008, when this research study was conducted. Taking into consideration the diversity of the IMGS body at this university, which encompasses those from Middle Eastern Muslim countries, where each country has its own culture, as well as those from Turkey; Iran; Pakistan; India; post-Soviet Union countries, such as Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Afghanistan; African Arab countries, such as Egypt, Sudan, Somali, and Mauritania; North African countries, such as Tunis, Algeria, and Morocco; Indonesia; and other non-Muslim countries, one can easily recognize the diversity of sub-Islamic cultures. However, IMGS expected that Americans, both on and off campus, would appreciate such a diverse body of educated people and, thus, they would have a great opportunity to mix, mingle, communicate, and interact and learn from IMGS, first hand, about Islam and, also, about other cultures. But, unfortunately, the reality was different. Most of the student participants in this study reflected on the hesitation of American's in approaching IMGS, and their lack of knowledge about how, what, and when to take the initiative,

... they [Americans] are really reluctant to ask, they think it is maybe offensive, and they don't want to be offensive, they, sometimes, want to show that they don't have any prejudice about my culture ... I think if you don't know about a culture you should ask about it (C-548).

Another student reflected on the differences between young and older Americans in approaching international students in general, and IMGS in particular, "they

[Americans] are open ... but the young generation is more open and want to know what is in there and what's happening and who are these people they are dealing with" (C-763).

A general perspective on most Americans' approach to interacting with foreigners, accompanied by a suggestion, was offered by another IMGS,

they [Americans] don't jump into conversation with you until they know you, but if the other side feels shy and cannot speak and talk why don't you jump and start a dialogue?... this is how I think about it ... I think if one starts talking and engages others we can start talking about many topics as I did with my very few American friends ... I talked about my own country, schools, culture, religion, habits and people's behaviors (C-382).

Another student reflected on his experience with the level of interest that most American's show in interacting and participating in presentations of cultural activities from his country,

I think Americans are very welcoming when it comes to this kind of issue [responding to cultural activities] ... their response is always positive ... they encourage you to do such things ... they asked about our culture, and seemed to be interested ... some of them asked questions ... in overall their responses were positive and good (C-795).

Interest in University/ Department Sponsored/ Administrative Cultural Activities

Most of the IMGS reacted positively to the university/departmentally sponsored/administrative programs. Such programs provide a safe environment for IMGS which, in return, encourages their participation and infuses the informal learning setting with a sense of comfort and security. Likewise, American students often feel more comfortable in reaching out to IMGS under the umbrella of the university/or academic department. Some students emphasized the role their departments could play

in promoting a better cultural understanding by arranging monthly cultural gatherings with presentations and local food and dishes,

in my department ... we have a cultural event ... all international students give presentations about their culture once or twice a month ... with some fliers and students and food from their country ... Americans like free international food, also it [presentations] should not be too long ... maybe 15-20 minutes presentation with 40 minutes chit-chat with national cuisine ... it will have really good impact (C-692).

Other students commented on their participation in I-Week, the different cultural activities, and how beneficial it was in bringing IMGS closer to American students,

I was one of the participants, I dance with my group to introduce my country, and also cooked food and cuisine ... Americans were amazed by our dance and were excited ... after the event they approached us and said you did great job ... it was amazing” (C-188).

Research Question 3

How do the analyses of the researcher’s narratives in her autoethnographic account and the International Muslim Graduate Students’ interviews compare and contrast with the MMT experiences? How does this data analysis inform and explain educational spaces and experiences over time?

Medieval Muslim Travelers Data Presentation

In order to answer this question, the researcher first presented the third source of data collected from the MMT al-rihla accounts recorded in their travel books: *Safarnama* by Nasir Khusraw, *The Book of Travel* by Ibn Jubayr, and *Rihla* by Ibn Battuta. The following is a brief outline of the events in these accounts and excerpts of data that pertain to the objectives of this research study.

Safarnama (Nasir Khusraw)

Nasir Khusraw embarked on his journey to Mecca with his brother Abu-Saeed and a servant in 1046. He first visited Akiat, Van, Nishapur, Aleppo, Arzan, Amid, Bittis, Mayfaraqin, Ma'arratun-Nu'man in Khurasan (currently Iran) and Central Asia, and then he visited Baghdad, Syria (Hama, Tripoli, Damascus), Lebanon and Palestine (Bayrout, Sidon, Tyre, Acre, Hayfa, Jerusalem, and Bethlehem). He arrived in Mecca in 1047 to conduct his first hajj and then traveled to Egypt, in the same year, staying in Cairo for three years during the Fatimid period (909-1171). In 1055, Khusraw returned home to Khurasan, but was soon forced into exile in the Pamir Mountains for 15 to 20 years, where he died in 1077.

In the opening of his book *Safarnama*, Khusraw tells the story of his spiritual transformation which was the reason behind his journey to hajj,

I went to Jizjanan and stayed there for a month. I was constantly drunken on wine. One night I saw a man in my dream asking me for how long would I continue drinking wine, the drink that takes away men's mind. The man called on me to change. But I replied that wise men can do nothing other than this; get drunken so they forget about their miseries. The man replied that we can not lessen our miseries by losing our emotions, rationale, and wisdom as a result to drinking wine. Such a man can never guide people to righteous life, instead he must search for other ways to increase his intellect and gain more wisdom. I asked how? The man replied: he will found it who searches for it. Then he pointed out to Kibla, Ka'ba in Mecca. I woke up and could still see the image in front of my eyes. I said to myself: I woke up from last night dream; it is time to wake up from a forty years of loss. (Khusraw, p. 1)

Khusraw's book of travel is full of detailed observations and geographical, historical, and cultural descriptions of cities and places he visited. He was "very conscious of the way cities are fortified and how they are administered ... he tells about

the gates ... thick walls, where the waters come from ... the length and breadth of cities ... markets, items and costs” (Hunsberger, 2000, p. 115). His description of the city of Qazvin depicts cultural aspects of its people in addition to physical details about the city, its architecture, economy, and irrigation system,

“I arrived to Qazvin which has many orchards with neither walls nor hedges, so that there is nothing to prevent access to the gardens.... Its walls were well fortified and furnished with crenellations, and the bazaars were well kept, only water was scarce and limited to subterranean channels. Of all the trades practiced in the city, shoemaking had the largest number of craftsmen” (p. 3).

After a year of traveling in Kurasan and central Asia, Khusraw arrived in Jerusalem in 1047. He described the city and mentioned the visits of Muslims, Christians, and Jews to its sacred places. Muslims who were unable to make the pilgrimage to Mecca could visit Jerusalem, instead, and perform the “requisite rituals and offer a sacrifice on the customary holiday.... More than twenty thousand people come during the first day of Dhu l-hejja” [the month of pilgrimage on the Muslim lunar calendar], and “from the Byzantine realm and other places too come Christians and Jews to visit the churches and synagogues located there” (p. 21). Khusraw describes the city of Jerusalem,

Jerusalem is situated on top of a hill and has not source of water save rain. Around the city is a fortified rampant of stone and mortar with iron gates ... it is built on rock ... there being twenty thousand men there when I saw it. The bazaars are nice, the buildings tall, and the ground paved with stone. There are many artisans in the city, each group having its own separate quarter. (p. 21)

Khusraw described the holy land and reflected on it as a religious place and space,

Passing out of the mosque you come out onto a large, expansive, and flat plain called Sahera. They say that this is where the Resurrection will take place, where all men will be gathered together ... O God! On that day

wilt Thou be Thine own servants' protector and Thy mercy, Amen. O Lord of the universe! (p. 22)

It was there, in Jerusalem, that Khusraw prayed and asked God for forgiveness, "I, Nasir, prayed there and asked God for grace in piety and to be cleansed of the sin of disobedience" (p. 26). He visited and described the mosques in Jerusalem, and prayed at Jesus' cradle in an underground mosque,

In the south corner of the east wall is an underground mosque ... it contains Jesus' cradle, which is made of stone and is large enough for men to pray in. I too prayed there. It is firmly fastened to the floor so that it cannot be moved. This is the cradle the Child Jesus was placed in when he spoke to people. On the east side is the *mehrab* ... it is said that this was Jesus' birthplace ... many brass and silver lamps are hung here and kept burning throughout the night. (p. 26)

He then described the tombs of Prophet Abraham and Joseph (pbu), al-Aqsa mosque, and Bay'at al-Qomama (the Church of the Resurrection), "every year many people come from Byzantium to visit it, and the Byzantine king himself comes in disguise so that no one will recognize him" (p. 37). From Jerusalem he went to Nubia (southern Egypt) and described its people, "the people there are black, and their religion is Christianity" (p. 41). He continued his travels to Cairo and referred to the ebb and flow of the Nile's tide and how it is measured, "in the city of Old Cairo measuring devices have been constructed, and there is an agent who received a salary of one thousand dinars to watch and see how much the level rises" (p. 41). In Egypt, he witnessed the opening of the Canal, al-Khalij, during the time of the Sultan, al-Mo'ezz le-Din Allah,

the sultan's soldiers stood in groups and battalions, and each ethnic group has a name ... Kotamis, Batelis, Masamudis, Mashareqa, Bedouins, Ostadhs, Sarais, and Zanjis. All of these soldiers are on the sultan's pay, and each receives a fixed salary and/or wage according to his rank (p. 49).

He gave a detailed description of the ceremony and the sultan's convoy on that specific day in the history of Egypt. It is believed that it was in Cairo that Khusraw converted to Ismailism, and trained for three years to become an Ismaili missionary. Khusraw was impressed by the amount of security that the city of Cairo afforded its residents and noted it in his book, "the security and the welfare of the people of Egypt have reached a point that the drapers, moneychangers, and jewelers do not even lock their shops – they only lower a net across the front, and no one tampers with anything" (p. 57).

From Cairo, Khusraw traveled to Hijaz (currently Saudi Arabia) and conducted his first hajj. He gave detailed descriptions of Jidda, Lehsa', Mecca, and Medina; and their geography, cultures, peoples, and hajj rituals. Khusraw conducted hajj four times during his seven-year journey, but it was only during his second hajj that he resided in Mecca for six months. At this time, he resided near the Ka'ba, *mujawer*, and took personal responsibility for opening its doors every morning for Muslims to enter and pray within it.

In his description of Jidda, Khusraw reflects on his visit to the emir (prince) of Jidda and the position of 'Ulama' (Muslim scholars) at that time,

I went to see to emir of Jidda, and he was generous enough to exempt me from the customs duties that would have applied to me. When I passed through the Muslim Gate, he wrote to Mecca saying that I was a scholar and nothing was to be taken from me (p. 67).

From Hijaz, Khusraw journeyed to Yemen, Oman, and Iraq, where he visited Basra (a southern city), and reflected on an incident at the bathhouse,

When we [he and his brother] arrived we were naked and destitute as madmen ... I wanted to enter a bath [a public bath] ... the bath attendant ... looked at us as though we were madmen and said "get away from here!"

... children who were playing at the bathhouse door threw stones and yelled at us, chased after us ... we retired into a corner to contemplate the changes in the world. (p. 91)

But later, Khusraw managed to meet with the sultan, and received new clothes and money from him. He and his brother then returned to the bath dressed in finery and accompanied by servants, and were admitted with many apologies. Khusraw writes that, “he included this incident in his travelogue so that his readers would not despair in times of adversity, but would know that sometimes God’s mercy does come through” (Hunsberger, 2000, p. 117).

In 1047, he arrived in the city of Jond Qennasrin where Ab’l Ala’ of Ma’arra, a prominent figure in Arabic poetry and literature, lived. Khusraw wrote,

Although blind, he was the head of the city and very wealthy ... everyone in the city was like a slave to him, but he himself had chosen the ascetic life. He wore coarse garments ... he divided his bread into nine pieces and content himself with only one the entire day and night. He denied his wealth to everyone.... There was always more than two hundred persons from all over gathered about him reading literature and poetry ... he has composed more than a hundred thousand lines of poetry. Someone once asked him why he gave his wealth to the people and hardly ate anything himself. His answer was: I own nothing more than what I eat. (pp. 11-12)

Finally, Khusraw returned to his home country, Khurasan (Iran), proceeding through Tun and then Qa’en. In Qa’en, he met a man named Abu Mansur Mohammad son of Dost, who knew something of medicine, astronomy, and logic and had the following dialogue with him,

“Outside the celestial spheres and stars, what is there?” he asked me.
 “Things that are inside the spheres have names,” I said, “but not anything outside them.”
 “What say you then?” he asked, “is there substance outside the spheres or not?”

“The universe must of necessity be finite,” I said. “And its limit is the last sphere. Indeed, it is called limit precise because there is nothing on the other side. When this limit has been realized, it then becomes necessary that what is outside the spheres not be like what is inside them.”

“Therefore,” he continued, “that substance, which reason must hold to be existent, is finite and ends at that limit. If it then be finite, up to what point does it exist? If it is infinite and without end, how then can it ever pass out of existence?” He went on in this manner and finally said, “I had suffered much perplexity over all this.”

“Who hasn’t?” I replied.

In 1052, Khusraw arrived in Khurasan and wrote these lines,

Though the toil and travail of the world be long
An end will doubtless come to good and bad.
The spheres travel for us day and night:
Whatever has once gone, another comes on its heels.
We are traveling through what can by passed
Until there comes that journey that cannot bypassed. (p. 104)

He was then forced into exile and died in 1077.

Conclusion

Hunsberger (2000) argued that Khusraw’s book of travel is that of “a man who is very observant, who takes the responsibility of recording and presenting facts truthfully for others, and who wants to help others learn from his experience” (p. 117). His travel account is not a mere description of places and people but rather the reflection of a critical eye of an intellect in search of knowledge as a path to God, and to better understand God’s creation and one’s Self. In his travels, Khusraw met with many people and visited many places, monuments, and public buildings. His book, *Safarnama*, “contains many keen and valuable observations on peoples and places as well as on the economic and social conditions of countries that he visited” (Thackston, 1986, p. vii). He was captivated by the architecture of his time and gave full descriptions of the shrines he

visited: the Dome of the Rock, Ka'aba, various mosques in Mecca and Medina, the churches in Jerusalem, and the shrines of saints, wherever he found them. Thackston added that Khusraw's travel observations,

on the places he visited give us an interesting ... view into the eleventh-century Islamic world. More importantly they provide us with an insight into a personality of that time ... what he [Nasir] choses to convey to his reader tells us more about himself that it does about what he saw. (p. xii)

In his search for knowledge, Khusraw takes seriously the hadith of the Prophet, "Seek knowledge even unto China". He asserts that "good deeds are not advocated simply because they are good, but because they bring you good either in this world or the next [hereafter]" (Hunsberger, 2000, p. 123). For Khusraw, exoteric (zahir) knowledge is gained from worldly experience(s), while esoteric (batin) knowledge is wisdom gained through a journey into one's inner self. For Khusraw, as an Ismaili scholar, this wisdom is "to be found in the family of the Prophet, 'aal al-beit, who are the gateway to the hidden truths of religion" (p. 122). For Khusraw, *Safarnama* is a "gift to others as he uses it to proclaim that what is here in this world matters and that having hope for the future matters ultimately" (pp. 117-118).

Rihla (Ibn Jubayr)

It is noteworthy that Ibn Jubayr never mentioned the circumstances behind his travel to conduct hajj. Many scholars (Broadhurst, 1952; Netton, 1991, 1996) have referred to the incident of Ibn Jubayr's wine drinking at the court of the governor of Granada as the main reason behind his travel to perform hajj. In his introduction to the translation of Ibn Jubayr's, *Rihla*, to English, Broadhurst (1952) records this incident,

On arrival before his master, he had been offered a cup of wine, but the continent clerk, a sincere Muslim who emulated the temperance of his prophet, had pleaded that never before had his lips touched strong drink. The unregulated prince, wishful of repairing this strange neglect, and with tones and gestures that allowed of no dispute, had thereupon cried: "Seven cups, by Allah, shalt thou drink"; and the trembling scholar, his apprehensions of the wrath to come obscured by present terrors, had been fain to swallow the forbidden draughts. Yet no sooner had he done so than the prince was seized with sudden piety, and in remorse had seven times filled the cup with golden dinars and poured them into the bosom of his servants' gown. (p. 15)

It was this incident that induced Ibn Jubayr, who had long wished to conduct hajj, to decide at once to perform the duty of pilgrimage to Mecca. Thus, on Thursday the 8th of Shawwal in the lunar calendar, or February 3, 1183, Ibn Jubayr along with Abu Ja'far Ahmed ibn Hassan, a physician from Granada, departed on their journey to Mecca.

Travelling through Al-Qabdlhag, they arrived at Tarif, and then embarked upon a sea voyage to Sicily. Ibn Jubayr described the raging sea and the wind, and how they finally arrived safely at the island,

The sea raged more, the horizon blackened, and the wind and rain rose to the tumult so that the sails of the ship could not withstand it and recourse was had to the small sails. The wind caught one of these and threw it, and broke the spar to which the sails are fixed and which they call the quriyah.... Despair then overcame our spirits and the hands of the Muslims were raised in supplication to Great and Glorious God. We remained in this state all that day, and only when night had fallen did there come some abatement, so that we moved throughout it with great speed under bare masts, and came that day opposite the island of Sicily. (p. 28)

From Sicily, Ibn Jubayr traveled to Egypt, arriving at the harbor of Alexandria in April with other Muslim travelers who were on their way to Mecca for hajj. He reported that the agents of the Sultan, Salah al-Din, came on board to record the travelers' names and

countries, and the amount of money and merchandise they had with them. In addition, the travelers were required to report all of the goods they had brought with them on the ship and pay a *zakat* (add to glosary) for customs (Broadhurst, 1952, p. 31).

Ibn Jubayr was fascinated by Alexandria's famous lighthouse. He described it,

One of the greatest wonders that we saw in this city was the lighthouse which Great and Glorious God had erected by the hands of those who were forced to such labor as "a sign to those who take warning from examining the fate of others" (Kuran XV, 75) and as a guide to voyagers, for without it they could not find the true course to Alexandria. It can be seen from more than seventy miles and is of great antiquity. It is most strongly built in all directions and competes with the skies in height. Description of it falls short the eyes fail to comprehend it, and words are inadequate, so vast is the spectacle. (pp. 32-33)

He then went into the city of Alexandria, and was captivated by its buildings and architecture. He commented,

We have never seen a town with broader streets, or higher structures, or one more ancient and beautiful. Its markets also are magnificent ... the buildings below the ground are like those above it and are even finer and stronger, because the waters of the Nile wind underground beneath the house and alleyways. (p. 32)

Ibn Jubayr continued describing the city of Alexandria and its advancements in different fields. He commented on its colleges and the Sultan's generosity and concern for students and scholars from other lands,

Amongst the glories of this city, and owing in truth to the Sultan, are the colleges and hostels erected there for students and pious men from other lands. There each may find lodging where he might retreat, and a tutor to teach him the branch of learning he desires, and an allowance to cover all his needs. The care of the Sultan for the strangers far extends to the assigning of baths in which they may cleanse themselves when they need, to the setting up of the hospital for the treatment of those of them who are sick and to the appointment of doctors to attend to them. (p. 33)

Ibn Jubayr then departed for other cities in Egypt. He visited Damanhur and Cairo, and was fascinated by the monuments, mosques, and the blessed shrines spread throughout Cairo. He extensively described the tomb of Husayn, the Prophet's grandson, which became a shrine and other shrines, including those of the family of the Prophet (pbuh) and his companions, the noble Muslim ladies, Imams (including the tomb of the Shafi'i Imam), learned Muslim men, and ascetics.

In Cairo, Ibn Jubayr visited the *maristan* [hospital] and described it as,

a palace, goodly for its beauty and spaciousness ... he [the Sultan] appointed as intendant man of science with whom he placed a store of drugs ... Facing the establishment is another especially for women, and they also have persons to attend them. A third which adjoins them, a large place has rooms with iron windows, and it has been taken as a place of confinement for the insane. They also have persons who daily examine their condition and give them what is fitting for them. All these matters the Sultan oversees, examining and questioning, and demanding the greatest care and attention to them. (p. 44)

On his way to the South of Egypt, Ibn Jubayr passed through the city of Usyut, and commented on the churches and other Christian constructions he saw,

After Manfalut comes the city of usyut [Lycopolis], a famous city of Upper Egypt about three miles distant from the west bank of the Nile, it has a pleasing aspect, and is surrounded by gardens of the date-palm.... Here is a mosque of Dhu 'l-Nun the Egyptian and that of Daud [David], one of the saints famed for good works and continence.... In this city are monuments and constructions built by the Copts and churches attended till to-day by the Christian Copt clients. (p. 53)

Ibn Jubayr's al-rihla to Mecca coincided with the battles of the Crusades in Egypt, Syria, and Palastine. During his departure from Egypt he recorded this incident,

In the month of Dhu 'l-Qa'dah, the first thing we saw was a large concourse of people come forth to gaze upon Rumi (add to glossary) prisoners were brought to the town on camels, facing the tails and surrounded by timbale and horn. We asked of their story ... a number of

Syrian Christians has assembled and built ships in that part of their land which is nearest to the ... [Red Sea], and had them moved their various parts on camels belonging to neighboring Arabs ... On arrival at the shores of the Sea, they had nailed their ships together ... and launched them into the sea. They had then sailed forth to harass (Muslim) pilgrims ... On the land they seized a large caravan journeying from Qus to ‘Aydhab and killed all in it, leaving none alive ... many infamous acts they committed ... are unheard of in Islam, for nor Rumi had ever before come to that place ... the worst.... was their aim to enter the City of the Prophet – may God bless and preserve him. (pp. 51-52)

Ibn Jubayr arrived in Jidda on July 24, 1183 and was surprised by its small size; it was a village in comparison to the big Egyptian cities with advanced architecture. He described Jidda,

This Jidda is a village on the coast ... most of its houses are of reeds, but it has inns built of stone and mud ... and having roofs where at night rest can be had from the ravages of the heat. In this village are ancient remains ... in it is a place having an ancient and lofty dome, which is said to have been the lodging place of Eve, the mother of mankind – God’s blessing upon her – when on her way to Mecca. (p. 70)

After being in the city of Jidda for some time, Ibn Jubayr reflected on its people; the social classes, Islamic sects, and its poor economy,

Most of the inhabitants of this town and the surrounding desert and mountain are Sharifs, ‘Aliites, Hasanites, Husaynites, and Ja’farites ... they lead a life so wretched as to break the hardest stone in compassion. They employ themselves in all manner of tradesmen such as hiring camels should they possess any, and selling milk or water and other things like dates which they might find, or wood they might collect. Sometimes their women, the Sharifahs themselves, would share in this work. (p. 71)

Ibn Jubayr devoted the following chapter(s) to Mecca and the Ka’ba. He was fascinated by the city of Mecca, “the city appears like a corner of heaven on Earth, a peaceable kingdom steeped in spirituality and order” (Wolfe, 1997, p. 36). He provided a detailed description of the Ka’ab; its structure, construction, the silver engraved doors, four

corners, and the rituals pilgrims conducted at and around it. In his description, Ibn Jubayr presented his future readers with an accurate portrayal of the Ka'ba, Mecca, and Medina so that Muslims could read and learn about it. Netton (1996) noted that Ibn Jubayr's *Rihla* gained fame mostly for his accurate descriptions of the holy places in Mecca and Medina.

On Sunday, the 20th of Dhu Al-Hijjah in 579, which corresponds to the 1st of April, Ibn Jubayr left Mecca heading toward Mosul in Iraq. On his way, he and his companions paused in al-Zahir Valley. He described the caravan of the three khatuns (royal females) who had come with the Emir (prince) of Iraq to Mecca to conduct hajj. He mentioned the incident that took place when one of the three Khatuns was found to be missing from her place on a Friday night, after she had left with the servants and retinue she had brought to Mecca, to return home on Saturday night.

Some declared that she left in remonstrance for something she disapproved of in the Emir, others that it was the promptings of a yearning to be near the Sacred Mosque that had inclined her to that venerated place of meeting. But none can know such hidden things save God. (p. 190)

The three Khatuns that Ibn Jubayr referred to were pious Muslim women. The first Khatun had brought with her “around one hundred camels especially to bear clothing, provisions, and other things ... her age is about five and twenty years,” while the second Khatun, the mother of Mu'izz al-Din Lord of Mosul, had several “pious works to her name”. The third Khatun was the daughter of al-Daqus, Lord of Isbahan, in the land of Khurasan; she was also of “great consequence and impressive circumstance, and is much

given to good work.” Further, Ibn Jubayr commented that the three Khatuns combined a “most strange mixture of pious work and regal pride” (p. 190).

Ibn Jubayr then departed for the city of al-Kufah; he visited Baghdad and attended lectures and discourses held in Islamic centers by the prominent imams. He was impressed by the educational system and facilities offered to seekers of knowledge in Baghdad, and he greatly encouraged his fellow scholars from Maghrib to seek knowledge from the Eastern Islamic centers. Ibn Jubayr wrote,

Whoever of the young men of the Maghrib seeks prosperity, let him move to these lands and leave his country in the pursuit of knowledge and he will find many forms of help. The first of these is the release of the mind from the consideration of livelihood, and this is the greatest and most important. For when zeal is present the student will find the way clear to exert his utmost endeavor, and there will be no excuse for lagging behind, save in the case of those addicted to idleness and procrastination, and to them this exhortation is not addressed, we speak only of the zealous who in their own land find that the search of the means of living comes between them and their aim of seeking knowledge. Well then the door of this East is open, so enter it in peace industrious youth and seize the chance of undistracted (study) and seclusion before a wife and children cling to you and you gnash your teeth in regret at the time you have lost ... I have given counsel to those I found listening and called to those I heard answering. (pp. 298-299)

On May 28th, or Safar 15th, Ibn Jubayr left for the North of Iraq, to the city of Mosul, and then proceeded to Syria. On his way, he visited Nasibin, Dunaysar, Diyar Bakr, Maridin, Harran, Manbij, Buza’ah, Aleppo, Hamah, and Hims, before reaching Damascus on July 12th. In his description of Damascus, he wrote:

She is the paradise of the Orient, the place where dawned her gracious and radiant beauty, the seal of the lands of Islam where we have sought hospitality, and the bride of the cities we have observed, she is garnished with the flowers sweet-scented herbs, and bedecked in the brocaded vestments of gardens, In the place of beauty she holds a sure position, and on her nuptial charrs she is most richly adorned.... Damascus was honored

when God Most High gave asylum there to the Messiah and his mother-may God bless and preserve them – “on a hill having meadows and springs (Qur’an, 23: 50). (p. 271)

In the city of Damascus, Ibn Jubayr noticed a large number of colleges and a few hospitals, “there are about twenty colleges in the city, and two hospitals, one old and the other new ... these hospitals are among the great glories of Islam, and so are the colleges” (p. 296).

Ibn Jubayr was fascinated by the art and architecture of many buildings in Damascus. One of these famous buildings was the Cathedral-Mosque. He was awed by its beauty and wrote,

The beauty, perfection of construction, marvelous and sumptuous embellishment and decoration, it is one of the most celebrated mosques of the world ... one of the strangest things concerning it is that the spider never spins his web therein, nor do swallows ever enter it or alight thereon. (The Caliph) Al-Walid ibn ‘Abd al-Malik [A.D. 705-15] ... undertook the construction of this mosque and sent to the king of the Rum at Constantinople ordering him to send twelve thousand craftsmen from his country, offering threats in case he should delay ... The amount spent on it ... [above five and a half million sterling] ... It was Walid who took that half of the church which remained in the hands of the Christians and embrace it in the mosque. For it had been in two parts, the eastern belonging to the Muslims and the western to the Christians. (p. 272)

He then visited Mary’s Church,

Inside the city is a church held in great consideration by the Rum. It is called Mary’s Church, and after the temple in Jerusalem they have none more esteemed than this. It is an elegant structure with remarkable pictures that amaze the mind and hold the gaze, and its spectacle is wonderful indeed. It is in the hands of the Rum, who are never molested within it. (pp. 295-296)

Ibn Jubayr’s al-rihla is also significant as it was conducted during the Crusades. He provided a rich and detailed description of some of the battles and battle fields he

witnessed, and wrote about Muslim-Christian communication during a time of war. He commented,

One of the astonishing things that is talked of is that though the fires of discord burn between the two practices, Muslim and Christian, two armies of them may meet and dispose themselves in battle array, and yet Muslim and Christians travelers will come and go between them without interference. (p. 300)

Ibn Jubayr observed not only the peaceful coexistence and trade agreements between Muslims and Christians in Damascus, and other Islamic and Frank territories, but also the tax payment agreement between the two sides. He noted,

The Christians impose a tax on the Muslims in their land which gives them full security; and likewise the Christian merchants pay a tax upon their goods in Muslim lands. Agreement exists between them, and there is equal treatment in all cases. The soldiers engage themselves in their war, while the people are at peace and the world goes to him who conquers. Such is the usage in war of the people of these lands; and in the dispute existent between the Muslim Emirs and their kings it is the same, the subjects and the merchants interfering not ... the state of these two countries. (p. 301)

On the other hand, Ibn Jubayr, as a Muslim scholar, noticed that Islamic sects in the lands of Syria and Lebanon were divided into many different schools. In addition to the two major divisions of Sunni and Shi'at, he observed other sub-sects within the Shi'at division, in Damascus. Ibn Jubayr noted,

In these lands, the Shi'ites have strange manifestation. They are more numerous than the Sunnis, and have filled the land with their doctrines. They have divers sects, among whom are the Rafidites (add to glossary) who are blasphemers ... the Imamites, the Zaydites, who say that the Imamate is exclusive to the house of 'Ali, the Isma'ilies, and the Nusayrites who are infidels for the attribute divinity to 'Ali. (p. 291)

Ibn Jubayr then left Damascus for the city of Sur [Tyre], which was a refuge for the Franks during the Crusades, when the fighting between Muslims and Christians was

ongoing. He described the city; its clean roads and streets and two gates, its very beautiful port, and above all its people. Ibn Jubayr described the Surans' good manners and their kindness to Muslim strangers extensively, in addition to some cultural practices. He attended and described a Christian wedding,

All the Christians, men and women, had assembled, and were formed in two lines at the bride's door. Trumpets, flutes, and all the musical instruments, were played until she proudly emerged between two men who held her right and left as though they were her kindred. She was most elegantly garbed in a beautiful dress from which trailed, according to their traditional style, a long train of golden silk. On her head she wore a golden diadem covered by a net of woven gold, and on her breast was a like arrangement. Proud she was in her ornaments and dress, walking with little steps of half a span, like a dove, or in the manner of a wisp of cloud.... Before her went Christian notables in their finest and most splendid clothing their trains, falling behind them. Behind her were her peers and equals of the Christian women, parading in their richest apparel and proud of bearing in their superb ornaments. Leading them all were the musical instruments. The Muslims and Christians onlookers formed two ranks along the route, and gazed on them without reproof. So they passed along until they brought her to the house of the groom; and all that day they feasted. (pp. 320-321)

From Syria and Palestine, Ibn Jubayr traveled to Sicily. He described the city and the peaceful coexistence of its Muslim and Christian people. Ibn Jubayr was most impressed by the King of Sicily, William. He wrote,

Their King, William, is admirable for his conduct, and the use he makes of the industry of the Muslims, and for choosing eunuch pages who all, or nearly all, concealing their faith, yet hold firm to the Muslim divine law. He has much confidence in Muslims, relying on them for his affairs, and the most important matters, even the supervisor of his kitchen being a Muslim; and keeps a band of black Muslim slaves commanded by a leader chosen from amongst them. (p. 340)

Ibn Jubayr further described the city and its remarkable buildings, such as the famous Church of the Antiochian, and he recorded the customs and traditions of Christian women in Sicily,

We examined it [Antiochian Church] on the Day of the Nativity [Christmas Day], which with them is a great festival; and a multitude of men and women had come to it. Of the buildings we saw, the spectacle of one must fail of description, for it is beyond dispute the most wonderful edifice in the world. The inner walls are all embellished with gold. There are slabs of coloured marble ... inlaid throughout with gold mosaic and surrounded by branched ... green mosaic. In its upper parts are well-placed windows of gilded glass which steal all looks by the brilliance of their rays, and bewitch the soul ... This church has a belfry supported by columns of coloured marble. It has raised cupola over cupola each with its separate columns, and is therefore known as the Columned Belfry, and is one of the most wonderful constructions to be seen. (p. 349)

Although the majority of Ibn Jubayr's observations and descriptions were focused on buildings and their architecture, he also described some of the peoples he met in specific cities and places, and placed a special focus on clothes, customs, and traditions. He described Sicily's women,

The Christian women in this city follow the fashion of Muslim women, are fluent of speech, wrap their cloaks about them, and are veiled. They go forth on this Feast Day dressed in robes of gold-embroidered silk, wrapped in elegant cloaks, concealed by colored veils, and shod with gilt slippers. They parade to their churches ... bearing all the adornments of Muslim women, including jewelry, *henna* (natural dye) on their fingers, and perfumes. (pp. 349-350)

In the month of Muharram, in 581, or April-May, 1185, Ibn Jubayr left Trapani to embark on a sea voyage to return home to Andalusia. He passed the islands of Sardinia and Iviza, arriving at the port of Denia, and then travelled to the city of Qartagannah (Cartagena). On Thursday, the 22nd of Muharram, in 581, or April 25,

1185, Ibn Jubayr and his companion returned home to Granada. Ibn Jubayr ended his book of *Rihla* with these lines,

“She threw away her staff and there she stayed,
As does the traveller at his journey’s end.”
The span of our journey ... was two full years and three months and a half. Praise be to God, Lord of the Universe. (p. 366)

Conclusion

One of the controversial issues surrounding Ibn Jubayr’s book, *Rihla*, concerns its manuscript(s). It has been argued that there are three manuscripts of his journal of *Rihla*. In his study, Bonebakker (1972) noted that there are three manuscripts of Ibn Jubayr’s first travel account. One is housed in the principle mosque at Fez, Jami’ al-Qarawinnyin, in Morocco, while the second was found in the Zawiya Hamziyya at Sidi Hamza in Morocco, where it was restored and is now preserved, but is not available for review. The third manuscript is not only available for review but is also preserved on microfilm at the Bibliotheque Generale (al-Maktaba al-‘Ammah). In addition, Bonebakker noted that no new data had been added to or published with any of these three manuscripts. For the purpose of this study, the researcher reviewed and examined the manuscript translated and edited by William Wright, published in 1856 under the title, *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr*; it was subsequently revised by M.J. De Goeje in 1907.

Ibn Jubayr’s al-rihla is significant for several reasons. The first is the time period during which it was conducted: the Crusades. Ibn Jubayr documented incidents occurring on the battle field, where Muslims and Christians were fighting, as well as events occurring in the daily life of civilians. Ibn Jubayr gave detailed descriptions of Christian-Muslim encounters for soldiers as well as civilians, “the soldiers engage

themselves in their war, while the people are at peace ...” (as cited in Netton, 1996, p. 96). Ibn Jubayr, himself, traveled on Christian ships several times during his sea voyages, which appeared to be a standard practice. Second, Ibn Jubayr’s al-rihla account is a valuable resource for information concerning the art and architecture of the Medieval Muslim World. He provided detailed descriptions of most of the places he visited, giving special consideration to measures, dimensions, and distances. This is especially true of his precise descriptions of the holy places of Mecca and Medina. Netton (1996) argued that it is mainly because of Ibn Jubayr’s precise description of these holy places that his book *Rihla* became so famous, as, “the traditional rihla was centered round the visit to the Holy Places of Arabia” (p. 99). Third, Ibn Jubayr’s account of al-rihla is extremely valuable, historically, since it provides accurate dates for his travels and the incidents he witnessed. Weber (2010) asserted that Ibn Jubayr is, “almost alone among medieval travel writers in his careful, even obsessive, attention to dates” (p. 3). He was extremely careful about documenting the dates, not only on the Islamic calendar and the lunar one, but also on the European calendar. By doing so, his rihla account has gained credibility and reliability as a historical resource. Fourth, his travel account writing is precise, descriptive, informative, and non-fictionalized, as is that of his successor, Ibn Battuta, which resulted in it being intense though short. In J.N. Mattock’s words, Ibn Jubayr’s writing account, “is interesting, simply written and well-detailed; it does very well what it is intended to do: describe the places that he [Ibn Jubayr] visits, so that their main features are clear to his audience” (as cited in Netton, 1996, p. 100). Fifth, Ibn Jubayr’s rihla account established a new genre in Arabic

literature, *adab al-rihla*; this genre continues to evolve to this day, as new works are added.

Netton (1991) further analyzed Ibn Jubayr's *rihla* account, and asserted that its structure is governed by three elements,

a trinity of time, place and purpose as experienced in (a) the author's precise, almost neurotic, use of the Islamic calendar, (b) the travel or *rihla* impulse and associated "sense of place" which imbues the entire narrative, and (c) the primary orientation towards, or focus on, Mecca, goal of the Islamic pilgrimage. (p. 23)

According to Weber (2010), Ibn Jubayr's account, together with Ibn Battuta's, are significantly important and influential as they, "defined what it meant to be from Andalusia (or not) to large numbers of people. Their writings were extremely popular and widely read for hundreds of years after their composition" (p. 4). Ibn Jubayr, "sought and recorded knowledge about what he saw and where he traveled with the eagerness of a magpie" (Netton, 1996, p. x).

Rihla (Ibn Battuta)

Ibn Battuta embarked on his journey to conduct hajj and visit the holy places in Mecca and Medina on June 14, 1325, leaving his birthplace in Tangier, Morocco. Tangier at that time was "a converging point of four geographical worlds - African and European, Atlantic and Mediterranean. It was an international town whose character was determined by the shifting flow of maritime traffic in the strait-merchants and warriors, craftsmen, and scholars" (Dunn, 1986, p. 13). He first journeyed to Tunis and then visited several different countries on his way to Mecca for hajj. In his book of travel, Ibn Battuta described the places he visited, especially shrines and other religious places, in

great detail, and he wrote about the people he met, especially scholars, religious men, judges and rulers. His rich descriptions of customs, traditions, rituals, and different cultural practices in the Islamic World at that time are both entertaining and informative. Though some scholars have argued that his *Rihla* was motivated by secular considerations, such as his love of adventure and desire to attain high positions at different courts, Ibn Battuta's real motivation was a solemn obligation to perform hajj as well as to seek knowledge. He returned home to Morocco in 1355, and stayed there until he died in 1368.

In the opening of his book *Rihla*, Ibn Battuta wrote,

My departure from Tangier, my birthplace, took place ... with the object of making the Pilgrimage to the Holy House [at Mecca] and of visiting the tomb of the Prophet, God's richest blessing and peace be on him [at Medina]. I set out alone, having neither fellow-traveler in whose companionship I might find cheer, nor caravan whose party I might join, but swayed by an overmastering impulse within me and a desire long-cherished in my bosom to visit these illustrious sanctuaries. So I braced my resolution to quit all my dear sons, female and male, and forsook my home as birds forsake their nests. My parents being yet in the bonds of life, it weighed sorely upon me to part from them and both they and I were afflicted with sorrow at this separation. (Dunn, 1986, p. 30)

He traveled through Central Maghrib, Tlemcen, Bijaya, Tunis, and Libya to arrive at Egypt/Alexandria in 1326. Alexandria, at that time, was one of the five most magnificent cities, with its two harbors, "the eastern reserved for Christian ships, the western for Muslim" (Dunn, 1986, p. 41). He met with eminent Muslim scholars and *qadis*, and then he traveled to Cairo, noting the number and quality of its schools and colleges,

each convent in Cairo is affected to the use of a separate congregation of poor brethren, most of whom are Persians, men of good education and adepts in the way of Sufism. Each has a shaikh [as superior] and a warden, and the organization of their affairs is admirable. (p. 44)

From Egypt he traveled to Damascus and described it,

Garden glades, whose languid breeze revives the soul of men! She shows herself boldly to her beholders with polished display, and cries to them "Hither to a resting-place of beauty, by night and at noon (p.118)

After departing, he proceeded to Jerusalem and then to Iraq, visiting two of its famous cities at that time; Wasit and Basra. He commented on the Islamic college of Wasit and its teaching system,

It has a large and magnificent college with about three hundred cells, where strangers who have come to learn the Qur'an are lodged; this college was build by the shaikh Taqu al-Din b. Abd al-Muhsin al-Washit who is one of its principal citizens and jurists. To each student in it he gives a set of clothing every year and supplies money for his expenses every day, and he himself sits in the college with his brothers and his associates to teach the Qur'an. I met him and he showed me hospitality and supplied me with provisions of dates and money. (p. 272)

On his way to Basra, Ibn Battuta visited the tomb of Shaykh Ahmed ibn al-Rifa'I, who, in the 12th century, founded the Sufi order, with which Ibn Battuta had earlier become affiliated, and he had the opportunity to meet one of the Shaikh's descendents. The Shaikh was visiting the city to observe a display of the ecstatic exercises of the Rifa', and attended one of its esoteric practices. He observed that,

When the afternoon prayers had been said, drums and kettle-drums were beaten and the [Sufi] brethren began to dance After this they prayed the sunset prayer ... they began to recite their dhikr [mystical litany] ... they had prepared loads of firewood which they kindled into flame and went into the midst of it dancing; some of them rolled in the fire, and others had it in their mouths, until finally they extinguished it entirely ... (Dunn, 1986, p. 91)

He then visited Basra, a southern city of Iraq and one of the metropolitan cities of renown throughout the world at that time. The significance of Basra as a centre of knowledge was well known for centuries before Ibn Battuta's visit; it was described as,

“the veritable Athens of Islam where the classical civilization of the Arabs had first been conceived and cast. It had been the home of numerous early Muslim luminaries; theologians, philosophers, poets, scientists and historians” (Dunn, 1986, p. 92). Ibn Battuta further described the people of Basra as, “of generous nature, hospitable to the strangers and readily doing their duty by him, so that no stranger feels lonely amongst them” (p. 276). It was in al-Basra that Ibn Battuta commented angrily on the many gross errors of grammar made by a Muslim preacher at a Friday service, and complained to the *qadi*, who in turn lamented the deterioration of the Arabic language and lack of scholars in the science of its grammar, “it [Basra] had been the laboratory where the rules of classical Arabic grammar were worked out, the rules by which educated men conversed and wrote and distinguished themselves from common folk” (p. 92).

In his journey, Ibn Battuta searched for scholars in the field of law, educational institutes, and centers of knowledge. In Tustar (in Iran) he stayed for some time and commented on its college, its administrative system, and its Shaikh, a Muslim scholar,

I stayed in the city of Tustar at the college of the pious shaikh and versatile imam, Sharaf al-Din Musa ... the shaikh is a man of generous qualities and outstanding merits who combines knowledge and religion saintly life and munificence. He has a college and a convent, the servitors of which are slaves of his, four in number. One administers the endowments of the convent, the second lays out ... expenditure on each day, the third is the servitor of the table for visitors and supervises the distribution of food for them, and the fourth is of the head of the Commander of the Faithful Ali. (p. 285)

He left Tustar for Shiraz, another city in Iran, and was amazed by its women and their religious practices,

The people of Shiraz are distinguished by piety, sound religion, and purity of manners, especially the women. They wear boots and when out of doors are swathed in mantels and head-veils so that no part of them is to be seen, and they are [noted for] their charitable alms and their liberality. One of their strange customs is that they meet in the principals mosque every Monday, Thursday and Friday, to listen to the preacher sometimes one or two thousand of them, carrying fans in their hands with which they fan themselves on account of the great heat. I have never seen in any land an assembly of women in such numbers. (p. 300)

After Shiraz, he visited the city of Baghdad and described the Shrine of Imam Abu

Hanifa (God be pleased with him), in the vicinity of al-Rusafa,

Over it (the grave) there is a great dome, and a hospice at which food is served to all comers.... Near it is the grave of the Imam Abu Hanbal (God be pleased with him). There is no dome on it, and it is said that a dome was built over his grave on several occasions, but it was then destroyed by the decree of God Most High. (p. 334)

In his visit to Mardin (between Syria, Iraq, and Turkey) he described one of its famous

viziers, Imam Jamal al-Din al-Sinjari,

This qadi (judge) is a man of sound religion, scrupulosity and virtue; he dresses in coarse garments of woolen cloth which are not worth then dirhams apiece, and wears a turban of the same kind. He often holds his judicial sessions in the courtyard of a mosque, outside the college, in which he used to perform his devotions; and anyone seeing him who did not know him would think him to be one of the qadi's servants or assistants.

In his visit to Asia Minor and South Russia, he met with the Sultan (ruler) of Milas,

Shuja al-Din Urkhan Bak, and described him and his court,

He is the most honorable one of the best of princes, handsome in both figure and conduct. His intimates are the doctors of the law who are highly esteemed by him. At his court there is always a body of them, including the jurist al-Khawarizmim a man versed in sciences and of great merit. (p. 429)

On one of his sea voyages, he asked the master of the ship to take him ashore. Ibn Battuta disembarked on the Island of Crimea, where he entered a Church and met with a monk,

I saw a church so we made towards it. In it I found a monk, and on one of the walls of the church I saw the figure of an Arab man wearing a turban, and girt with a sword, and carrying a spear in his hand, and in front of him a lamp which was alight. I said to the monk: what is this figure? And when he replied "this is the figure of the prophet Ali, I was filled with astonishment. We spent the night in that church. (p. 469)

On his visit to the city of Bulghar,

I had heard of the city of Bulghar and desired to go to it, to see for myself what they tell of the extreme shortness of the night there, and the shortness of the day, too, in the opposite season.... I reached it during [the month of] Ramadan and when we had prayed the sunset prayer we broke our fast; the call to the night prayer was made during our eating ... the dawn broke. (pp. 490-491)

On his journey to the city of Constantinople, he described his visit,

Our entry into Constantinople the Great was made about noon or a little later and they beat their church-gongs until the very skies shook with the mingling of their sounds. When we reached the first of the gates of the kings' place we found it guarded by about a hundred men, who had an officer ... I heard them saying Sarakinu, Sarakinu, [which means Muslims. They would not let us enter, "they cannot enter except by permission (p. 504).

On his visit to Khwarizm, he referred to this incident in the court and how disputes were settled,

... the qadi comes daily to his audience-hall and sits in a place assigned to him, accompanied by the jurists and his clerks. Opposite him sits one of the great amirs, accompanied by eight of the great amirs and shaikhs of the Turks, who are called argujus. The people bring their disputed to them for decision; those that come within the jurisdiction of the religious law are decided by the qadi, and all others are decided by those amirs. Their decisions are well-regulated and just for they are free from suspicion of partiality and do not accept bribes. (p. 545)

He comments on the righteousness of the Sultan (ruler) of Transoxiana,

This shaikh used to preach to the congregation every Friday, exhorting the sultan to act righteously and forbidding him from evil and tyrannical acts, addressing him in the harshest terms while the sultan listened to him in silence and wept. He would never accept any gift or stipend from the sultan nor eat of any food of his nor wear any robe from him. The shaikh was indeed one of God's saintly servants. (p. 559)

On his visit to Samarqand, he described one of its famous shrines and its peoples' visit to it,

In the outskirts of Samarqand is the tomb of Qutham, son of Al-Abbas b. Abd al-Muttalib (God be pleased with both of them) ... the people of Samarqand go out to visit it on the eve of every Tuesday and Friday ... and make large votive offerings to it ... the tomb is surmounted by a dome resting on four pilasters, each of which is combined with two marble columns, green, black, white and red. The walls of the [cell beneath the] cupola are marble inlaid with different colors and decorated with gold, and its roof is made of lead. The tomb itself is covered with planks of ebony inlaid [with gold and jewels] and with silver corner-pieces; above it are three silver lamps ... (p. 568)

On his visit to Naisabur, he described its college as one of the best in all of the Islamic centers,

Its mosque is exquisite; it is situated in the centre of the bazaar and close by it four colleges, with an abundant supply of running water. They are inhabited by a great host of students studying the Qur'an and jurisprudence and are among the good colleges of that land. [But] the college of Khurasan in the two Iraqi, Damascus, Baghdad and Cairo although they attain the highest architectural skill and beauty yet all of them fall short of the college established by our Master, the commander of the Faithful, al-Mutawakkil ala'llah ... for this college has no rival in size, elevation, or the decorative plasterwork in it... (p. 584)

After his visit to India, he reflects on the justice of one of its sultans (rulers),

One of the Hindu chiefs brought a claim against him that he had killed the chief's brother without just cause, and cited him to appear before the qadi. Whereupon he went on foot and unarmed to the qadi's tribunal, saluted and made the sign of homage, having previously sent orders to the qadi that on his arrival at the tribunal, he (the qadi) should not stand up

for him nor move from his place. He walked up to the tribunal and remained standing before the qadi, who gave judgments against him, [decreeing] that he should give satisfaction to his opponent for his brother's blood and he did so. (pp. 692-793)

After occupying the position of a qadi in India for eight years, Ibn Battuta decided to withdraw from the Sultan's service, and devote himself to Sufi practices,

Sometime later I withdrew from the Sultan's service and attached myself to the shaikh and imam, the learned, devout, ascetic, humble-minded, pious Kamal al-Din Abdallah al-Ghari, the unique and unequalled personality of his age. He was one of the saints.... I devoted myself to the service of this shaikh and gave my possessions to the poor brethren and the needy.... I rid myself of everything that I had, little or much, and I gave the clothes off my back to a mendicant and put on his clothes. I remained with the shaikh as a disciple for five months ... I lodged in a hospice known by the name of the malik Bashir. I remained there engaged in devotional exercises during the month of Rajab and ten days of Sha'ban and at length was able to fast for five days in succession ... I used to recite the Koran every day ... I remained in this state for forty days and then the Sultan sent for me again. (pp. 766-767)

On his visit to South India, to the city of Hinawr, Ibn Battuta referred to the women in this city and their education, as follows,

The women of this town and of all these coastal districts wear no sewn garments but only unsown lengths of cloth, one end of which they gird round their waists, and drape the rest over their head and chest. They are beautiful and virtuous, and each wears a gold ring in her nose. One peculiarity amongst them is that they all know the Qur'an by heart. I saw in the town thirteen schools for girls and twenty-three for boys, a thing which I have never seen elsewhere. (p. 803)

On his visit to China, he described the city of Sin Kalan and commented on its two communities, where Christians and Muslims lived in peaceful co-existence,

In this middle of the city is a huge [church] with nine doors inside each of which is a portico with stone benches on which those living in the [church] sit. Between the second and third gates is a place where there are rooms in which blind people and chronic invalids live. They are all maintained and clothed from the endowments of the [church] ... I was

told that old men no longer strong enough to earn their living are maintained and clothed in this [church]. It is the same with orphans and widowed people without means. In one part of this city is the town of the Muslims who have their congregational mosque, the hospice and the bazaar. They have the qadi and the shaikh and in every town in China there is a shaikh al-Islam to whom all the affairs of the Muslims are referred. There is also a qadi who gives judgments among them. (p. 896)

From China, Ibn Battuta traveled to South India, the Maldiv Islands, Oman, Mecca and Medina (for hajj again), Damascus, Aleppo, Jerusalem, Egypt, Tunis, Spain, and, finally, he returned to Fez, his homeland in Morocco, in 1354. He died in 1378.

Criticism

Being born in the city of Tangier, known as the “crossroad for Christian and Muslim merchants hailing from both the West and East,” (Barsoum, 2006, p. 197), probably influenced Ibn Battuta to travel beyond his home town, as he wondered what lay beyond it. During his journey, over a period of thirty years, Ibn Battuta visited forty-four countries, as known in today’s world, covering a distance of more than 75,000 miles and meeting more than 2000 people (Wha, 1991).

In his book, *Rihla*, Ibn Battuta provided detailed descriptions of the geographical and historical places he visited, the people he encountered, and the customs and traditions he witnessed and/or, at times, practiced. He, furthermore, described the types of food, vegetables, and local dishes he enjoyed with people from different cultures. Though he was a great observer, he was especially interested in learning about the “inhabitants of the lands he visited ... and was fascinated by the encounter of new faces” (as cited in Barsoum, 2006, p. 197).

Ibn Battuta was the predominant traveler of his time, as Harvey (2007) argued, “not for his piety, not for his scholarship, but for his restless journeying the embodiment of the spread of Islam and Islamic civilization world-wide” (p. 10). For Ibn Battuta, the journey was much more important than the actual destination.

Though the purpose of Ibn Battuta’s al-rihla was mainly to conduct hajj, as a religious obligation, he also sought knowledge as a juridical scholar in the great Islamic centers. Barsoum (2006) noted that Ibn Battuta travelled not to “take to the road out of necessity, like the majority of his contemporaries, but rather for the sheer pleasure of the adventure,” as travel for him was both a passion and an art (p. 194). In his travels, Ibn Battuta regarded himself as a citizen of both *Dar al-Islam* (Muslim lands) and Morocco. Ibn Battuta exhibited four different facets in his al-rihla as a Muslim traveler: a pilgrim and pious Muslim, a devotee of Sufism, a juridical scholar, and a “member of the literate, mobile, world-minded elite and an educated adventure” (Dunn, 1986, p. 11).

The credibility of Ibn Battuta’s book, *Rihla*, has long been debated for two reasons: first, it was recounted in its entirety from memory, and second, it was dictated to a professional writer, Ibn Juzayy. Harvey (2007) argued that: (1) it should be acknowledged that, “there can be no doubt about the importance accorded to memorization among Muslims in the Middle Age ... as particular respect was accorded to the memorization of the Qur’an” (p. 6), (2). The style of the *Rihla* book is not “utterly smooth and uniform” (p.7) or chronologically narrated. Ibn Juzayy, as a “professional man of letters, editing, polishing, and adding to what was dictated,” added his notes and comments as separate sections, at some times, and, at others, in certain passages, “we

may be certain that some passages were the contribution of Ibn Juzayy, because he says so, and we may judge that some passages retain the traveller's very own words" (p. 7).

However, containing such detailed information, Ibn Battuta's book "could have gone into the making of a gastronomic atlas of the East" (as cited in Barsoum, 2006, p. 200). Dunn (1986) noted that Ibn Battuta's description of "places, people, politics, and life ways" of the lands of Eurasia and Africa, in particular, have, "exposed the pre-modern roots of globalization" (p. ix).

In his own words, Ibn Battuta commented on his book, *Rihla*,

I have indeed - praise be to God - attained my desire in this world, which was a travel through the earth, and I have attained therein what none other has attained, to my knowledge. The world to come remains, but my hope is strong in the mercy and clemency of God. (Harvey, 2007, p. 19)

Identified Themes

The researcher read the MMT accounts several times in their original language, Arabic, and then in the English translations looking for common themes. The researcher applied the holistic content method in narrative analysis, also called thematic analysis, to analyze these data. According to Riessman (2008), in thematic analysis the focus is on "what" is said and not on "how" or "to whom" or "for what purposes" it is said. In the preliminary reading stage, the researcher looked for emerging patterns and overarching themes in the form of foci throughout each narrative. The researcher also searched for repetitions, omissions, contradictions, and unfinished descriptions and marked the various themes in the narratives after reading each one separately and repeatedly, and then analyzed them for unifying themes occurring throughout the three travel accounts.

Seven themes emerged from the data analysis and are presented in the following sections.

Hajj, the Pilgrimage to Mecca, Was Conducted as: A Religious Obligation, Repentance for Sins, and a Physical and Spiritual Path in Seeking God's/Allah's Forgiveness

When the three MMT embarked on their al-rihla to perform hajj, although their goal was the same, to perform hajj as a religious obligation, the motives were different for Ibn Jubayr and Khusraw. For Ibn Battuta it was his sole intention to conduct hajj as one of the five pillars in Islam,

... with the object of making the Pilgrimage to the Holy House [at Mecca] and of visiting the tomb of the Prophet, God's richest blessing and peace be on him [at Medina], I set out alone, having neither fellow-traveler ... nor caravan whose party I might join, but swayed by an overmastering impulse within me and a desire long-cherished in my bosom to visit these illustrious sanctuaries. (p. 8)

For Khusraw, the purpose of his pilgrimage was to repent from his sins after a transformational dream,

One night I saw a man in my dream asking me for how long would I continue drinking wine, the drink that takes away men's minds. The man called on me to change. But I replied that wise men can do nothing other than this; get drunken so they forget about their miseries. The man replied that we can not lessen our miseries by losing our emotions, rationale, and wisdom as a result to drinking wine. Such a man can never guide people to righteous life, instead he must search for other ways to increase his intellect and gain more wisdom. I asked how? The man replied: he will find it who searches for it. Then he pointed out to Kibla, Ka'ba in Mecca. I woke up and could still see the image in front of my eyes. I said to myself: I woke up from last night dream; it is time to wake up from a forty years of loss. (p. 1)

Ibn Jubayr performed hajj to repent for his sin of drinking wine, although he was under pressure and forced to perform this act by the governor of Granada, for whom he worked as his secretary,

The unregulated prince, wishful of repairing this strange neglect, and with tones and gestures that allowed of no dispute, had thereupon cried: "Seven cups, by Allah, shalt thou drink"; and the trembling scholar, his apprehensions of the wrath to come obscured by present terrors, had been fain to swallow the forbidden draughts Ibn Jubayr's al-rihla to hajj was a journey of expiation and seeking forgiveness from God. (Broadhurst, 1952, p. 15)

Thus, his journey was for expiation and seeking God's forgiveness from drinking wine.

Seeking Knowledge, Talab Al'ilim, Is Strongly Associated with Hajj

The theme of seeking knowledge, both in its scholarly and secular forms, is evident throughout the three MMT al-rihla accounts. For example, Ibn Battuta mentioned receiving his license to teach Islamic law in Damascus,

In the Umayyad mosque ... I heard the whole of the Sahih of the imam Abu' Abdullah Muhammad b. Isam'il al-Bukhari ... explained by the aged shaikh, the goal of travel from all quarters, the conjoiner of the younger with the elder generation ... it was completed in fourteen sittings ... Amongst the scholars of Damascus who gave me a general license were the above-mentioned shaikh ... al-Hajjaron my request for it and other scholars ... All of these gave me a general license [to teach] in the year [seven hundred and] twenty-six at Damascus. (p. 157)

Ibn Battuta attended classes and studied at Islamic centers and received many certificates and advanced licenses in his profession as qadi/judge. In his visit to al-Yaman, he described his meeting with some of its eminent Muslim scholars and a Sufi jurist,

The scholars and doctors of the law in this country are upright, pious, trustworthy, generous, and of fine character. I met in the city of Zabi the learned and pious shaikh Abu Muhammad al-San'ani, the jurist and accomplished sufi Abu l-Abbas al-Abyani, and the jurist and traditionist Abu Ali al-Zabidi. I placed myself under their protection; they received

me honorably, and showed me hospitality ... I also met the jurist and learned qadi Abu Zaid Abd al-Rahman al-Suffi, one of the eminent men of al-Yaman. (p. 367)

Khusraw, on the other hand, made it clear, starting with the introductory paragraph of his travel account, that the search for knowledge is a search for wisdom,

“instead he must search for other ways to increase his intellect and gain more wisdom. I asked how? The man replied: he will find it who searches for it ... I woke up and could still see the image in front of my eyes. I said to myself: I woke up from last night dream; it is time to wake up from a forty years of loss. (Khusraw, 1986, p. 1)

In addition to gaining wisdom, Khusraw spent three years in Cairo, in which he attended regular religious classes and scholarly learning circles of the Ismaili school.

As for Ibn Jubayr, though there are no specific references in his al-rihla account to indicate any scholarly religious endeavors or his joining formal learning circles or classes, he attended lectures and discussions held in mosques on various occasions. One of these was in Baghdad, where he attended a lecture held by the prominent imam, Radial-Din al-Qazwini, who was a sheik, the head of the Shafi'is, a theologian at the Nizamiyah College, and distinguished for his pre-eminent role in fundamental studies. Ibn Jubayr reflected,

We went to the lecture he gave following, the afternoon prayer of Friday the 5th of the month of Safar. He ascended the pulpit and the readers, who were on chairs in front of him, began to recite ... the imam then delivered a quiet and grave discourse that dealt with the various branches of learning, including a commentary on the Book of Great and Glorious God ... with an explanation of the meaning. Like a shower of rain, questions were sprinkled upon him from all sides, and these he did not fall short to answer, and was prompt to do so, delaying not. A number of notes were passed to him and, gathering them together in his hand, he began to answer each one, throwing away each note as he dealt with it, until he had come to the end. (p. 228)

Seeking Knowledge from Places as Well as People Was Part of the Journey

This theme manifested itself clearly in the three MMT accounts through the special interest and focus placed on the cultural-geographical components of their al-rihla records,

I arrived to Qazvin which has many orchards with neither walls nor hedges, so that there is nothing to prevent access to the gardens.... Its walls were well fortified and furnished with crenellations, and the bazaars were well kept, only water was scarce and limited to subterranean channels. Of all the trades practiced in the city, shoemaking had the largest number of craftsmen” (Khusraw, 1986, p. 3).

Ibn Jubayr’s description of Alexandria in Egypt provides another example of this theme,

One of the greatest wonders that we saw in this city was the lighthouse which Great and Glorious God had erected by the hands of those who were forced to such labor ... and as a guide to voyagers, for without it they could not find the true course to Alexandria. It can be seen for more than seventy miles and is of great antiquity. It is most strongly built in all direction and competes with the skies in height. Description of it falls short the eyes fail to comprehend it, and words are inadequate, so vast is the spectacle. (The Book of Travel, pp. 32-33)

Another example is Ibn Battuta’s description of one of the colleges and the students’ accommodations in Wasit in Iraq,

It has a large and magnificent college with about three hundred cells, where strangers who have come to learn the Qur’an are lodged; this college was built by the shaikh Taqu al-Din b. Abd al-Muhsin al-Washit who is one of its principal citizens and jurists. To each student in it he gives a set of clothing every year and supplies money for his expenses every day, and he himself sits in the college with his brothers and his associates to teach the Qur’an. I met him and he showed me hospitality and supplied me with provisions of dates and money. (p. 272)

Place, as a Theme, Is Strongly Emphasized through Thick and Detailed Description

In his visit to Damascus, Ibn Battuta described the beauty of the city, imbuing it with a historical-religious significance that adds more in-depth meaning to his geographical description,

she is the Paradise of the Orient, and dawning-place of her resplendent light, the seal of the Islamic lands which we have explored, and the bride of the cities which we have unveiled ... she is ennobled by the fact that God Most High gave a refuge to the Messiah (upon Him be peace) and his Mother in it, "upon a hill furnished with security and a flowing spring"... Her soil is sated with abundance of water until it yearns for thirstiness, so that even the rocks and the rugged places almost cry to thee" (p. 118).

He describes the sacred mosque in Mecca,

The sacred mosque lies in the midst of the city and occupies an extensive area; its length from east to west is more than four hundred cubits ... and its breadth is approximately the same. The most venerable Ka'ba stands in the center of it ... The height of its walls is about twenty cubits, and the roof is supported by tall pillars, arranged in a triple row, of most sustention and beautiful construction. Its three aisles are arranged on a marvelous plan, which makes them appear like a single aisle. The number of marble pillars which it contains is 490, exclusive of the plaster pillars which are in the Dar al-Nadwa annexed to the sanctuary ... along the wall of this colonnade is a series of small platforms beneath vaulted arcades; these are occupied by teacher so the Qur'an, copyists and tailors ... (p. 193)

In his description of the Sacred Mosque and the Ancient House in Mecca, Ibn Jubayr wrote,

It has four corners and is almost square ... the principle corner is twenty-nine cubits ... and is the one containing the Black Stone ... the venerable door is raised above the ground eleven and a half spans. It is of silver gilt and of exquisite workmanship and beautiful design, holding the eyes for its excellence and in emotion for the awe God has clothed His House in ... the door has two silver staples on which is hung the lock. It faced to the east and is eight spans wide and thirteen high. The thickness of the wall in which it turns is five spans, the inside of the blessed house is

overlaid with variegated marbles and the walls are all variegated marbles.
(p. 78)

Khusraw described the city of Mecca and the Sacred Mosque,

“The city of Mecca is situated how in the midst of mountains such that from whatever direction you approach, the city cannot be seen until you are there. The tallest mountain near Mecca is Abu Qobays, which is round like a dome, so that if you shoot an arrow from the foot of the mountain it reaches its top ... on top of the mountain is a stone stele said to have been erected by Abraham. The city lies on a plain between the mountains and measures only arrow- shots square ... the Haram Mosque is in the middle of the plain and the city lanes and bazaars are built all around it ... the only trees in the city are at the western gate to the Haram Mosque” (p. 68).

Emphasis on Islamic Orthodoxy Applied in Practice

In his journey, Khusraw sought out the learned and criticized teaching and education. He wrote about a conversation he had with a young man called the Master, Ali Nasa'i, who was teaching a group of pupils surrounding him. Khusraw criticized Ali Nasa'i for his lack of knowledge about the material he was teaching,

During the teaching conversation, Ali kept saying “I read this with Avicenna” and “I heard this from Avicenna” (Avicenna was a prominent philosopher and scholar at that time). But later he said to me, “I do not know anything about mathematics and would like to learn something of the arithmetic art”. And I thought, “How the fellow could possibly teach anything if he did not even know the subject” (p. 3).

Ibn Jubayr's implicit message to his fellow citizens in Maghrib is clear evidence of his belief in and application of Islamic orthodoxy in practice in the search for knowledge. He wrote,

Whoever of the young men of the Maghrib seeks prosperity, let him move to these lands and leave his country in the pursuit of knowledge and he will find many forms of help. The first of these is the release of the mind from the consideration of livelihood, and this is the greatest and most important. For when zeal is present the student will find the way clear to

exert his utmost endeavor, and there will be no excuse for lagging behind, save in the case of those addicted to idleness and procrastination, and to them this exhortation is not addressed, we speak only the zealous who in their own land find that the search of the means of living comes between them and their aim of seeking knowledge ... I have given counsel to those I found listening and called to those I heard answering. (pp. 298-299)

On another occasion, Ibn Jubayr commented on an incident he witnessed in the port of Alexandria, where some of the customs officials examined passengers' luggage in a derogatory way that contradicted Islamic teachings and practice,

One of the most infamous things we saw was a group of insolent exactors, carrying in their hands long, pointed prods with handles, going aboard the ships to examine what was in them. There was no bundle or sack into which they did not drive those accursed staves in case there should be in the baggage, which held nothing but provisions, some unseen goods or money. This is the most shamefully affecting of the odious happenings. God has forbidden spying [Koran XLIX, 12: "Do not spy, nor let some of you backbite others"] ... May God punish these oppressors at the hand of the just Sultan and if He wills, favour his success (p. 56)

Pride in Cultural and Religious Identity as a Muslim

MMT were proud of their cultural and religious identities as Muslims traveling in Muslim lands during the golden age of Islamic civilization. The MMT accounts are rich with descriptions, reflections, and comments that refer to the many achievements and accomplishments that they witnessed throughout their al-rihla in Islamic lands. They proudly reflected on different aspects of their Islamic culture and Muslim practices throughout their journeys. For example, Ibn Jubayr reflected on Sultan Saladin and his glorious reign and achievements, especially in helping pilgrims to travel to Mecca,

The pilgrim in their lands does not cease to pay dues and provide foods until God helps him to return to his native land. Indeed, but for what God has done to mend the affairs of Muslims in these parts by means of Saladin, they would suffer the most grievous oppression, with no

remission of its rigors. For Saladin lifted from the pilgrim the customs duty, and in its stead provided money and victuals with orders that they should be sent to Mukthir, Emir of Mecca. (pp. 71-72)

Ibn Battuta recorded his visit to Khwarism and his attendance at one of the regular practices of its Emir, a Muslim ruler, in the audience-hall of the Islamic-court,

It is one of the regular practices of this Emir that the qadi comes daily to his audience-hall and sits in a place assigned to him, accompanied by the jurists and his clerks. Opposite him sits one of the great Emirs, accompanied by eight of the great Emirs and shaikhs of the Turks ... the people bring their disputes to them for decision; those that come within the jurisdiction of the religious law are decided by the qadi, and all others are decided by those Emirs. Their decisions are well-regulated and just, for they are free from suspicion of partiality and do not accept bribes. (p. 545)

Khusraw wrote about his visit to the city of Tabas and the hospitality of its Emir,

[The prince] kept us in Tabas for seventeen days and showed us much hospitality. When we left he bestowed presents and apologized for any shortcomings. (May God rejoice in him!) (p. 100)

The Peaceful Co-Existence of Muslims, Christians, and Jews Was Recounted

The three MMT reflected on the co-existence of Muslims with the people of the Book, Christians and Jews, on different occasions in their al-rihla. For example, Ibn Jubayr reflected on Muslim-Christian peaceful co-existence in Damascus,

The Christians impose a tax on the Muslims in their land which gives them full security; and likewise the Christian merchants pay a tax upon their goods in Muslim lands. Agreement exists between them, and there is equal treatment in all cases. The soldiers engage themselves in their war, while the people are at peace and the world goes to him who conquers. (p. 301)

Ibn Battuta noted that on one of his sea voyages he disembarked on the Island of Crimea, where he entered a Church and met with a monk. He wrote,

I saw a church so we made towards it. In it I found a monk, and on one of the walls of the church I saw the figure of an Arab man wearing a turban, and girt with a sword, and carrying a spear in his hand, and in front of him a lamp which was alight. I said to the monk: what is this figure? And when he replied “this is the figure of the prophet Ali,” I was filled with astonishment. We spent the night in that church. (p. 469)

Khusraw asserted that Muslims co-existed peacefully with Christians and Jews, especially on his visit to Jerusalem. In his description of the historical city he wrote,

They [Muslims] perform the requisite rituals and offer a sacrifice on the customary holiday. Some years more than twenty thousand people come during the first days of Dhu l-hejja bringing their children to celebrate their circumcision. From the Byzantine realm and other place come Christians and Jews to visit the churches and synagogues located there. (p. 21)

IMGS’ and MMT’ Al-rihla Comparison

The researcher examined the themes generated from her auto-ethnographic account and the IMGS’ al-rihla experiences and found an overlap between the two sets of themes. The themes of “cultural identity”, “bridging the gaps”, and “appearance and reality” were also found in those of the IMGS. Both the researcher and the IMGS showed a strong sense of cultural identity on different occasions and during certain incidents, and through various cultural encounters with the Other and/or activities. This was evident regardless of whether they were representing their identity as Muslims and/or as cultural agents for their respective nations. The IMGS-body [the student body here includes the researcher along with the IMGS participants] experiences demonstrated a strong sense of self-concept as cultural agents for their respective nations and cultures. The second theme of “bridging the gaps” could be observed throughout the IMGS-body by the actions they took, either to reach out to the Other or in response to

the Other's initiative. And the third theme "appearance and reality" can be depicted by the topic, "caution, fear, and issues of trust in being a Muslim in the U.S.". The significance of this theme, especially, rings true to the researcher herself, since she is a female who wears a hijab and has had similar experiences with the stereotypes regarding covered Muslim women. The researcher then compared IMGS-body and MMT generated themes of al-rihla and found that there are similarities as well as differences between them. In the following section I will discuss the similarities, first, and then the differences in the themes.

Similarities

Appreciation of Knowledge and Seeking Knowledge

This theme was essential to both the IMGS-body and MMT experiences, regardless of whether the knowledge sought was religious, as in the case of MMT, or secular in nature, as for the IMGS-body. The IMGS-body, in general, sought secular knowledge in its scholarly and social forms. Their graduate education programs provided them with knowledge beneficial to them as individuals, to their respective home countries, if they decided to go back home, and to humankind in general. On the social level, the IMGS-body learned about other people, culture(s), and new ways of thinking and seeing the world around them.

The MMT sought religious knowledge, in addition to their al-rihla for hajj, by joining regular Islamic teaching centers, attending lectures at mosques, and taking advantage of other teaching opportunities in different settings. Secular knowledge was

gained by the MMT through their observation, communication, and interaction with other people and cultures.

Al-Rihla as a Means and a Path

Al-rihla for both IMGS and MMT was both a means and a path to social communication and better understanding of the Other. For IMGS it was a means to communicate and interact with other people from other nations: Americans and/or other international students. At the same time it was a path in the search for knowledge as a religious obligation, both encouraged and rewarded in Islam.

For MMT, al-rihla was a path to conducting hajj as a religious obligation, thereby seeking forgiveness from God as well as a means to communicate and interact with other Muslims around the world. Hajj, as a form of al-rihla in Islam, serves a dual role: a means to gain forgiveness from God for previous sins, and a cultural practice that brings Muslims from different countries, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds together as one community/Umma.

Place as a Theme

Place, as a theme, was evident in both MMT' and IMGS' experiences, although it was approached differently in the two accounts. The MMT manifested this theme through their thick and detailed descriptions of the physical appearance and construction of the various places they visited and/or passed through, while the IMGS focused more on human communication and interaction in the new "place" from a cultural point of view. No physical descriptions were mentioned or referred to in any of the IMGS' interviews, but, rather, the focus was on human relationships. For the MMT, "place" was

not only a geographical location but also a religious, cultural, educational, and political symbol, while the IMGS, for the most part, omitted physical descriptions and focused more on cultural elements.

Differences

Al-Rihla as a Religious Obligation versus Seeking Knowledge

This difference is evident when the goals of al-rihla are considered. For MMT, although their hajj al-rihla was strongly associated with seeking knowledge, the travelers' sole intention was to perform hajj as a religious obligation. While for IMGS the primary motivation for their al-rihla was their intention to seek knowledge by pursuing a graduate degree.

Traveling In and Out of the Muslim World

The al-rihla of MMT mainly took place within the Muslim World of their time and within Muslim societies, with the exception of Ibn Battuta's journey outside the Muslim territories. On the other hand, the IMGS' al-rihla occurred in a non-Muslim country and, more significantly, during a time of political, social, and cultural conflict with the Islamic World. Thus, the two experiences are significantly different in reference to the political climate encountered by the two groups of travelers.

Religion, Politics, and Positionality in Negotiating Cultural Identity

Since the MMT were citizens of one Islamic community/Umma that had a more advanced political, social, economic, and scientific environment, in comparison to the other countries/civilizations of that time (especially the European countries, as the Americas had not yet been discovered), their al-rihla travel experiences were conducted,

examined, and recorded, accordingly, from this perspective. In addition, the Islamic world of the 10th-13th centuries, the time frame of the three MMT al-rihla experiences, had marshaled the most powerful military force. Thus, the MMT negotiated their cultural identities from a position of strength, in regard to religious and political power and social and cultural status.

On the other hand, the IMGS' al-rihla took place in the U.S. in the twenty-first century, at a time when the U.S. was considered to be a super power and the Islamic world/Muslim countries were considered to be third world/developing or underdeveloped countries. Therefore, the IMGS' negotiation of their cultural identity in the U.S. was influenced by many factors that created complex layers of inferiority at the political, social, cultural, scientific, and/or economic levels.

Advanced Transportation and Technology and the Concept of Time

Without doubt advanced transportation and technology have advantages over the old/traditional means of transportation/technology. However, their greatest disadvantage lies in the reduction, and, at times, elimination of communication and direct interaction between humans on the road to their destinations. Advanced transportation and technology results in a shorter communication time span, as they reduce the amount of human interaction, which, in turn, enlarges cultural gaps. In the modern/postmodern age of advanced technology, the Internet, and virtual communication, human-human interaction has been reduced and/or, on many occasions, replaced by human-machine interaction that is larger in size and scope.

Despite the fact that the IMGS' travel to their destination was faster and easier, it deprived them of the experiences that they would have gained during a longer journey. In the Medieval Muslim World, though transportation was time consuming, it also allowed a greater opportunity(s) for the accumulation of experiences during the journey to their destinations. Such experiences are significant in providing the travelers' with new insights and more in-depth knowledge during their al-rihla. While the MMT' journeys encompassed gradual and in-depth transition periods between places of departure and those of destination, the IMGS' journey, in contrast, appeared to consist of travel between two places without the accumulation of real-life experiences along the way;.

Recorded Accounts, Auto-Ethnography, and Cultural Exchange

Though the MMT al-rihla accounts were recorded several centuries ago, they have provided generations of scholars, historians, anthropologists, and sociologists with detailed and accurate descriptions of Medieval Muslim society during a specific era of human history. Regardless of whether the MMT al-rihla accounts were recorded based on personal interests or motivations, they depict Muslim experiences of al-rihla as an important and vital form of Muslims' movement and travel throughout Islamic history. At the same time, the MMT accounts provided people with detailed geographical, historical, social, and cultural information, and the religious perspectives of three intellectual Muslim scholars and travelers. The MMT were Muslim scholars who provided perspectives about Muslim and non-Muslim countries, different cultures, and other ways of thinking and living.

Aside from the researcher's auto-ethnographic account, none of the IMGS who participated in this study mentioned or referred to having written any type of an autoethnographic account, not at the time of their interviews nor in their future plans. Although these types of writing, including travel records or diaries, are, for the most part, kept personal or private, in fact, they provide a significant cultural record that might be very helpful in bridging cultural gaps if approached in a scholarly manner.

Discussion

The data analysis of the three sources of information showed that educational experiences and spaces for Muslim travelers, over time, have been strongly influenced by three major factors: religious beliefs about knowledge/seeking knowledge, culture and cultural identity, and issues of power and positionality. Muslim travelers throughout history have reflected a strong and powerful sense of their beliefs and an appreciation of knowledge and seeking knowledge as a religious obligation that is also encouraged and rewarded. Muslim travelers seek knowledge in its different forms: religious, scholarly, social, and cultural, and in direct and/or indirect ways.

Culture and cultural identity are significant components of the Muslim travelers' self concept. However, the political climate surrounding Islam and Muslims, in general, governs and either enriches or reduces Muslim travelers' educational spaces. The level of self-presentation as cultural agents displayed by study participants and MMT, differed according to the era of Islamic history of which they were representatives, ranging from pride in their religion and culture (MMT) to fear and hesitation in acknowledging it.

Finally, the issues of political power and positionality of Islam and Muslims were significant factors that either empowered, as in Medieval Muslim society during which Muslims dwelled in their territories as a powerful force, or restricted Muslim travelers' efforts, as in the modern/postmodern era in which Muslims and Muslim countries struggle, as underdeveloped countries, to enhance educational spaces, especially in relation to the West/Other.

Research Question 4

How does the data analysis of narratives in the researcher's auto-ethnographic account and interviews with International Muslim Graduate Students inform and advance curriculum theory, cultural studies, postcolonial theory, and Islamic studies?

To answer this question the researcher examined the current situation of the IMGS' (including the researcher) experiences that inform and advance curriculum theory, cultural studies, postcolonial theory, and Islamic studies.

Curriculum Theory

Curriculum theory in the postmodern era is reflected in different formal and informal types and fields of education, such as, autobiography/auto-ethnography, public pedagogy, and theology. The researcher's auto-ethnographic account provides insights into her role as a cultural agent and educator through an examination of her experiences. Cultural-differences are recorded and carefully examined to provide vivid insights into cultural experiences, differences, and/or similarities,

Soon, bottles of water and juice, cans of soda, and snacks and chips are laid out on the tables, along with a lot of books, notebooks, and personal laptops. But I have not put anything to drink or eat on my table! (from Names and Titles narrative)

Cultural misunderstandings/ misinterpretations are presented and thoroughly examined using the three narratives. In *Dates for Ramadan*, the researcher was confronted with one of these cultural gaps, pre-suppositions and stereotypes about the Other, which prevailed in communication,

she approached me and said, You cannot use your bare fingers to pick up these dates. Your hands are full of germs and you will contaminate the whole box ... and I reply, I am sorry, ma'am, but the worker told me that I can use my bare fingers. She looks angrily at me, but does not reply, and does not leave the area either. (from *Dates for Ramadan* narrative)

Mutual interest is essential in approaching the Other. This was very clear in the third

narrative, *Father's Day*, as the researcher and her host family approached each other with interest to learn and teach, with respect, and open-mindedness,

Everyone is so excited, "as soon as I heard that an Iraqi student was visiting my son's family I decided to come and join them. I have never met an Iraqi!" the grandmother says and sits next to me. She asks, "How long have you been here? How do you find the U.S.? Do you like it? Are you enjoying your time? Were you invited to visit with other American families?" I prepare myself for a long, lovely night of Q & A (questions and answers). (from *Father's Day* narrative).

Public Pedagogy

Most of the institutions of higher education in the U.S. have a diverse student body that allows for informal teaching and learning experiences in both formal and informal settings, because they, "play as sites of political and cultural contestation"

(Giroux, 1991, p. 502). IMGS discussed approaches to public pedagogy for Islam and Muslims in their interviews,

in my country we believe that we are afraid of what we don't know ... there has been two events/presentations held by the university [Texas A&M University] on campus about "terrorism"... and other events about misconceptions about Islam ... people here must be less judgmental and critical and try to be open-minded (C-268).

Another student from Saudi Arabia reflected on his experience, which was strongly connected to public pedagogy as an educational approach,

“I think before September, 11 they [Americans] know Zero about us with the Zero knowledge I am talking about my country, they don’t know anything about the people and culture ... after September, 11 they really got the other perspective ... with the media it goes to the bitter side” (C-661).

One of the students reflected on his experience in the U.S. in 2001, both before and after 9/11, when he was enrolled in his masters program, and how American’s interest in learning about Islam grew rapidly after 9/11,

Before 9/11 I would say, as a Muslim, their [Americans’] attitudes towards Muslims were different and after 9/11 it was changed little bit ... after 9/11 they [colleagues and faculty] started push me to our religion ... they had a lot of suspicions, the people I worked with, they started asking does Islam encourage “terrorism”?, and stuff like this ... I told them no (emphasized) Islam does not ... I said: hey look people who do these things are probably not Muslims ... and then I read some verses from the Qur’an for them and this one from Sourat Al-Mai’da [the Chapter entitled The Table in reference to the Table bestowed on Jesus (peace on him) and his Students], “if anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder ... it would be as if he killed all mankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind” (C-233).

Institutes of higher education serve as public pedagogical spaces through their informal settings, as they provide ample space for cultural interaction between international students from different cultures and their American counterparts.

Public pedagogy also occurs in public spaces outside of formal schooling. One student reflected on his experience in public spaces off campus, “I conducted a lot of presentations at the consult of the city ... participated in the Arab culture week ... and I met with a couple of American students at a range on a barbeque” (C-570). Another female student commented on her experience with American women through weekly off

campus social events. She noted that American women were very interested in learning more about her and her culture, and were encouraged by the informal setting, “one of the American women said why don’t you prepare a kind of presentation about your country?... they wanted to know about our family relationships, education, and hometowns” (C-284).

Theology and Islamic Studies

Data analysis indicated the importance of religious texts, including the Qur’an and hadith, in IMGS’ experiences of al-rihla in seeking knowledge, seeking knowledge as an obligation in Islam, and hajj. The first word in the Qur’an “Read (Recite)” as it refers to the importance of knowledge in Islam, was mentioned by each participant,

Muslims are encouraged to seek knowledge wherever it is in the world, and they are encouraged to bear the burden of traveling for it ... I think knowledge is a kind of, related to the first word in the Qur’an “Read (Recite)” (C-124).

Knowledge is mentioned in the Qur’an and hadith ... the first word in the Qur’an “Read” is very important ... it asks Muslims to learn and seek knowledge. (C-583)

One of the students commented on the difference between knowledgeable and illiterate people and how this difference is mentioned and emphasized in the Qur’an, “Say [Mohammad]: Are those who know equal to those who know not?” (C- 449). Another student reflected on people’s knowledge as a means to better understand the creation and the power of the creator, as mentioned in the Qur’an, “It is only those who have knowledge among His slaves [human beings] that fear Allah” (C-690). A third student reflected on hajj as a religious obligation and stated a verse from the Qur’an,

Hajj, as we know, is one the five pillars in Islam and is obligatory on Muslims who can afford it, “And proclaim to mankind the Hajj. They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel; they will come from every deep and distant (wide) mountain highway (to perform hajj)” (C-753).

The IMGS also referred to other verses from the Qur’an that emphasize traveling to other lands and meeting people from other cultures as a way to communicate and interact with human kind,

“O Mankind! We have created you from a single pair, a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes in order that you come to know one another [not that you may despise one another]. The most honored of you with God is the most pious. And God is Well informed, Knowledgeable”(C-552).

Another student stated that knowledge should be a guide to wisdom,

I see al-rihla in Islam as a call from Allah (God) to Muslims to move, and communicate with other people on earth ... to learn from each other ... and ultimately to gain wisdom (C-494).

One of the students referred to his experience in the U.S., in 2001, both before and after 9/11, when he was enrolled in his master’s program, and how American’s interest in learning about Islam grew rapidly after 9/11,

Before 9/11 I would say, as a Muslim, their [Americans’] attitudes towards Muslims were different and after 9/11 it was changed little bit ... after 9/11 they [colleagues and faculty] started push me to our religion ... they had a lot of suspicions, the people I worked with, they started asking does Islam encourage “terrorism”, and staff like this ... I told them no (emphasized) Islam does not ... I said: hey look people who do these things are probably not Muslims ... and then I read some verses from the Qur’an for them and this one from Sourat Al-Mai’da[the Chapter entitled The Table, in reference to the Table bestowed on Jesus (peace on him) and his Students], “if anyone killed a person not in retaliation of murder ... it would be as if he killed all mankind, and if anyone saved a life, it would be as if he saved the life of all mankind” (C-233).

Other students referenced several hadith on the significance of al-rihla in seeking knowledge in Islam, and how it is encouraged in the Qur'an and hadith. One student stated this hadith, "Seek knowledge from cradle to grave," and the other student stated another one, "Seek knowledge as far as China" (C-356, 357).

Cultural Studies

Data analysis of the researcher's auto-ethnographic account enhanced Self discovery in relation to the Other, as a means to understand both the Self and the Other. It provided insights into cultural obstacles, behaviors, and practices occurring in different situations between the Self and the Other. Through careful observation, comparison, and recording actions and reactions, the researcher was able to depict essential factors that either enhanced communication with the other or hindered it. The following are examples of moments of cultural encounter with the Other,

I am professor X.Y.Z. You may call me Professor Z., Professor X., Dr. Z., Dr. X., or, simply, by my first name: X." "What?" I say to myself. "How can I address this professor by his first name, without using a title?" Surprised and taken aback by his gesture, I ponder this for a few moments. (from Names and Titles narrative)

At last, the worker returns, but with empty hands. He apologizes for his delay, and tells us that there is a problem with purchasing the dates. An elderly white woman is complaining about a lady with a hair scarf who filled a nylon bag with dates using her bare fingers. She is saying that the lady with the hair scarf must be charged for the whole box of dates, because she contaminated it! (from Dates for Ramadan narrative)

The IMGS commented on many cultural practices that they experienced in American culture. For example, one student mentioned her experience with her advisor,

I don't shake hands with [men] ... they [professors] gave me their hands to shake ... I think it will keep distance between me and them, so I have started to shake hands with them ... but when he [my advisor] learned that

I don't feel comfortable in shaking hands with him ... he is not giving me his hand anymore ... I think this is nice and this reflects a cultural awareness (C-277).

Another student reflected on his experience in communicating with American students, "they are really reluctant to ask ... they think it is maybe offensive and they don't want to be offensive" (C-451). One student commented on what she had learned about Americans so far, "they are really polite ... they don't jump in conversations with you unless they know you very well" (C-663). Another student stated that his experience was very positive and encouraged him, and that he had learned a lot about Americans,

"they [Americans] really respect people a lot, for who you are no matter what is your cultural background...they are really polite ... but you are weird to them unless you talk then they will engage with you ... this is a major concept on a daily basis for me" (C-577).

Another student discussed his experience in reference to the images he had had about the U.S. and Americans when he was back home, and noted that he was shocked when he arrived in the U.S. and saw that things are different in reality,

Hollywood also plays a great role in creating American culture ... and in creating the stereotypes of American culture ... and life here ... many places here are like places in my country ... and about the culture they are overall very tolerant ... but I used to think they [Americans] are all open-minded people, but I started changing my mind, some of them are but others are not at all" (C-649).

One of the students stated that he had his own stereotype about American culture, but he was re-discovering it,

I think I have learned a lot ... I think I had my stereotype about American culture and saw things differently, so I started to change my mind ... I have found people here are more like individually oriented (C-582).

Another student referred to his experience in unraveling some stereotypical about Muslims through cultural activities,

They asked me about my culture ... they asked me questions that concerned them and I answered ... I think at least it, at least, helped lift their stereotypes about my culture ... I think it is good ... we should have this kind of activities ... they really help between different cultures and bring better understanding (C-674).

Postcolonial Theory

As I was working on presenting the data related to this section, I encountered some difficulty in finding citations that reflect postcolonial practices, actions/reactions, or mentality. However, I reviewed the data thoroughly several times and finally found the following citations from my auto-ethnographical account and one reference from the IMGS interview data.

From Dates for Ramadan, the encounter with the elderly white woman reflects, partially, a postcolonial practice, “She approached me and said, You cannot use your bare fingers to pick up these dates. Your hands are full of germs and you will contaminate the whole box.” In Father’s Day, two situations can be considered to represent post-colonialism. The first is manifested in the question asked by one of the girls in my host family, “One of the girls hesitantly asks, girls marry through arranged marriage in Iraq, right?”, and the other example is the grandmother’s comment at the end of my visit, “To tell the truth, I never imagined I would meet such an educated Iraqi woman who is covered, but speaks wonderful English. Your English is excellent!” The only situation from the IMGS’ interviews that relates to post-colonialism was recounted in a female student’s experience with her department faculty members,

They thought that Muslim women are submissive and accept anything because they are covered, and they think that we don't have a lot of saying and not reflect ourselves, and I said no I can say what I want to say (C-97).

General Discussion

The data analysis of the researcher's auto-ethnographic account and the IMGS' interviews resulted in the identification of several themes that inform different educational avenues in curriculum theory, cultural studies, postcolonial theory, and Islamic studies. Data analysis showed that IMGS experience differing degrees of difficulty in communicating and interacting with their American counterparts and hosting community. One of the most important problems was that of misunderstandings about Islam and Muslims. The IMGS, encouraged by their academic departments and fellow colleagues, or by their own personal efforts, took responsibility for unraveling a lot of misunderstandings and erroneous interpretations about Islam and Muslims.

The researcher's auto-ethnographic account enhanced the understanding of individual experiences in the new culture, and these experiences overlapped with those of the IMGS. The overall results indicated that there is an essential need to expand the manner of communication and interaction with the Other through constructive dialogue. Public pedagogy is one of the most effective ways to reach this goal, as it allows an informal space for better communication. It is very important that both sides realize that cultural differences can be negotiated and similarities can be celebrated.

Theology and Islamic study can be promoted through a stronger focus on religious texts that enhance Muslim/non-Muslim peaceful interactions. It is very important that Moderate Muslims' understanding and interpretation of their religious

texts, rather than those of Muslim extremists' and/or erroneous Western interpretations, be taken into consideration and spread throughout different educational avenues.

In cultural studies, the focus should be on a better understanding of Islam as a culture and Muslims' cultural identity in cultural negotiations. Efforts to bridge cultural gaps should be approached from both sides. Cross-cultural communication is heavily influenced by several issues, such as political factors, religion and/or principles and beliefs, personal characteristics and traits, and, above all, a willingness to learn about the Other. It is only through intensive cultural activities, mutual respect, understanding, open-mindedness, and willingness to learn about the Other that cross-cultural differences can be addressed and bridged.

In postcolonial theory, stereotypes about the Orient have been spread throughout the media, in its different forms, creating a distorted image of the Other, especially of those from the East and Middle Eastern countries. Said (1978) argued that the Orient is a Western creation and is the result of, "the whole complex series of knowledgeable manipulations by which the Orient was identified by the West" (p. 40). Said added that the,

"Orientals or Arabs are ... shown as to be gullible, devoid of energy and initiative, much given to fulsome flattery, intrigue, cunning, and unkindness to animals; Orientals cannot walk on either a road or a pavementOrientals are inveterate liars ... and in everything oppose the clarity, directness, and nobility of the Anglo-Saxon race" (pp. 38-39).

Said (1978) further argued that the, "orient and Islam are always represented as outsiders" (p. 71) to Europeans. Westerners have perceived Arabs and Islam in a greatly politicized manner due to three factors,

1) the history of popular anti-Arab and anti-Islamic prejudice in the West which is immediately reflected into the history of Orientalism, 2) the struggle between the Arabs and Israeli Zionism, and 3) the almost total absence of any cultural position making it possible either to identify with or dispassionately to discuss the Arabs or Islam (p. 26).

Media misinformation and overemphasis on terrorism associated with Islam and Muslims, especially Middle Easterners, has contributed greatly to Americans' fear and rejection of this group of international students. The results of this study showed that IMGS are an isolated and marginalized subgroup of the international student body. As a result, the cultural interactions of IMGS' with their American counterparts and hosting community have become more difficult.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Previous chapters of this dissertation include the introduction to this study, a statement of the problem, the purpose and significance of the study, a literature review, the methodology used in collecting the data, the study results, and the findings presented according to responses to each research question.

This chapter includes a summary, discussion of the findings, implications and suggestions for further research.

Summary

Under the critical circumstances that have governed the relationships between the Muslim World and the U.S. after 9/11, and through my interest, training, and application to the Fulbright Cultural Exchange Program between the U.S. and my home country of Iraq, I became interested in learning more about the nature and function of al-rihla in search of knowledge. I wondered whether IMGS' experiences of al-rihla would provide a better understanding of the Self, the Other, and about different ways of cultural communication. Consequently, my main purpose in this study was to investigate IMGS' experiences of al-rihla in comparison to those of MMT, and the manner in which IMGS negotiate their culture and cultural identity in a southwestern American university.

This study was conducted to investigate the nature and function of the IMGS' al-rihla, and the role that IMGS could/might play in bringing about a better understanding between the Muslim World and the U.S. in a cultural context, in institutes of higher

education. Additional goals were to gain a better understanding of the Self, through personal experiences in cultural encounters; the IMGS motivations in seeking knowledge; concepts of al-rihla; and cultural experiences involving the Other.

The study sample consisted of the accounts of the researcher, seven IMGS enrolled in graduate programs at this southwestern university, and three historical Muslim travelers from the Islamic civilization, during the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries. The triangulation technique in data collection was followed, and the data were subjected to qualitative analysis methods. Data were collected from three different sources; the researcher's auto-ethnographic account, interviews with IMGS, and autobiographical/ethnographic al-rihla accounts of three MMT.

The researcher's auto-ethnographic account consisted of three narratives carefully selected from the researcher's journal for this study. The researcher kept a journal as a scholar in the Fulbright Cultural Exchange Program since her arrival in the U.S. in 2005. Each narrative captures a distinct cultural encounter with the Other that the researcher had experienced. The narratives were written in the form of short stories by combining the five key elements of: character, setting, plot, conflict, and theme. The researcher represented herself in her stories as the main character as well as the narrator. The settings were on and/or off campus in an academic or cultural context, using thick variable according to the nature of the narrative. The plots presented a series of events that related to the central conflict of each narrative. The conflict in each narrative was different; either in regard to another person, such as the elderly white woman in *Dates for Ramadan*, or to the narrator's self, such as with the cultural differences experienced

in the use of names and titles in Names and Titles. Finally, each narrative had its own theme(s) representing different cultural encounters in distinct cultural contexts.

The method used in analyzing these narratives was the holistic content method in narrative analysis, which is described in detail in Chapter III, the methodology. Analysis revealed, identified and discussed thematic patterns as themes.

In-depth interviews were conducted with the seven IMGS to collect information about their understanding of al-rihla, concepts of knowledge and seeking knowledge, experiences with the Other, and suggestions for improving issues of communication and interaction with the hosting community. The researcher was the “human instrument” in collecting the data in these interviews. Chapter III includes further information on and an explanation of the concept of the “human instrument”. An unstructured set of interview questions was used and revised accordingly. No demographic information was collected because of issues of confidentiality, but the participants agreed to disclose their countries of origin, gender, status as covered or uncovered Muslim females, and the number of years they had been enrolled in their graduate programs.

The third set of data collected was that of the three MMT al-rihla accounts. The researcher read copies of the original accounts in the traveler’s native languages; two of them were in Arabic, and the other was a translation of Persian to Arabic. The researcher then read the English translations of the three accounts and found them to be reliable for the purpose of citation. The researcher analyzed the three accounts using the holistic content method of narrative analysis, and identified recurrent categories and themes.

Finally, the researcher identified common categories and themes generated from a cross analysis of the three sources of collected data. Those results presented potential answers to the research questions and suggested ideas for future research studies.

Discussion

Research Question One

How does the auto-ethnographic account of the researcher enhance the understanding of al-rihla and relate to the experiences of Medieval Muslim travelers and other International Muslim Graduate Students in a research-intensive university in the southwestern U.S.?

The researcher concluded that keeping a journal of her auto-biographic/auto-ethnographic accounts, while living in a new country with a different culture, has helped her to better understand herself in relation to the Other, as well as to understand the Other. The researcher's experience was multi-layered in that it included several cultural components that resulted in a higher level of complexity in her encounters with the Other. Being an Iraqi in the U.S. after 2003, an Arab in the U.S. after 9/11, a Muslim in the U.S. after 9/11, and a Muslim woman with a hijab in the U.S. after 9/11 were cultural attributes that were viewed unfavorably in the U.S. Despite the fact that auto-biographic/auto-ethnographic accounts are very personal, they are a powerful means to understand the Self as well as the Other. By recording, visiting, and examining specific incidents, events, cultural practices, similarities and/or differences, and moments of cultural encounter between two different cultures I developed new insights into my al-rihla on a first hand basis.

The analysis of the auto-ethnographic account of the researcher produced three overarching themes in cross-cultural communication: cultural identity, bridging the gaps, and appearance and reality. By recording and analyzing cultural encounters, cross-cultural conflicts may be more closely examined to find better ways of communicating with the Other. By using the auto-ethnographic account, the researcher became more aware of how cultural identities are shaped and negotiated. Religion, personal beliefs and principles, ethnicity, nationality, and character traits are essential factors that shape cultural identity and, hence, govern one's approach to the Other.

It is the responsibility of both, the newcomers and the hosting community, to collaboratively and cooperatively work together to bridge cultural gaps. It is only through mutual willingness, good intentions, and open-mindedness that cultural misunderstandings can be better resolved. People from both cultures must cultivate an inclination to communicate, interact, teach and learn about the Other, negotiate their cultural differences, and celebrate their similarities.

The media in the West and the U.S. have portrayed Arabs, in particular, and Muslims, in general, as “bad” people and, thus, influenced Western minds to the extent that the physical appearance of Muslims’ has become provocative and associated with images of “terror” and “barbarism”. The process of al-rihla, more constructive interaction between the East and West, and communication with “real” Muslims rather than the imaginative portrayals of the media, will generate better understanding and replace illusion with reality.

I conclude that only through communication, interaction, continuous dialogue, and open mindedness to the Other can cultures meet and negotiate their co-existence, in order to achieve a better understanding of each other.

Research Question Two

What insights do International Muslim Graduate Students at a research-intensive university in the Southwestern U.S. provide about the nature of al-rihla, their experiences while attending a university in the U.S., and Muslim travel, in general, in qualitative interviews?

IMGS experiences of al-rihla gave them new insights into their understanding of knowledge and the importance of seeking knowledge in Islam as well as in cultural experiences within their hosting community. It is important to note that IMGS valued knowledge and the search for knowledge, in places near and far. IMGS believe that al-rihla is a means and a path in seeking knowledge, not only in their scholarly discipline but also as a cultural practice to meet, communicate, and learn about other cultures. IMGS struggle to present themselves as “ambassadors of peace” to Westerners and U.S. citizens, as their experience of living in the U.S. after 9/11 has been governed by caution and fear in being a Muslim in the U.S. As a result, their cultural activities are very limited and their interaction with their hosting community is very restricted and based on their own personal efforts; their attempts to reach out to the Other are strongly influenced by the Other’s interest and encouragement. There were very few signs of welcome from their hosting community to encourage them to be more open and courageous in reaching out to the Other. Very limited social interaction and signs of

alienation were evident and clearly depicted in the IMGS interviews. It is the responsibility, in this case, of the hosting community to provide a safe environment for the IMGS to feel welcome and to encourage them to present their culture to others so that cultural gaps may be overcome. In sum, the IMGS' interaction with their hosting community was governed by fear, suspicion, lack of interaction, and lack of interest on the part of the hosting community to reach out/or welcome the Other's attempts to communicate positively. The IMGS reported great interest in university sponsored and/or administered cultural activities, as it provided a safe environment for both sides, Americans and IMGS, to communicate and interact. IMGS also had a great interest in and demonstrated the priority of national culture through cultural communication and activities.

Research Question Three

How do the analyses of the researcher's narratives in her auto-ethnographic account and the International Muslim Graduate Students' interviews compare and contrast with the MMT experiences? How does this data analysis inform and explain educational spaces and experiences over time?

The data analysis of the three sources showed that there is an overlap between the experiences of al-rihla in some areas, such as appreciation of knowledge and seeking knowledge; al-rihla as a means and a path in Muslims' lives; and the significance of place as a theme. The differences in experiences of al-rihla were indicated in: the goals of al-rihla; perceptions of al-rihla in/out of the Muslim World; impact of religion, politics, and positionality on cultural identity and its representation; the effect of

advanced transportation and technology and its impact on the concept of time; and finally, the importance of the written records of al-rihla and auto-ethnographic accounts. The comparison also showed an overlap between the experiences which indicated that educational experiences and spaces for Muslim travelers have been strongly influenced over time by several major factors that are discussed in the following sections.

Religious beliefs about knowledge/seeking knowledge as Muslim travelers demonstrates a strong and powerful appreciation of knowledge and seeking knowledge as a religious obligation, which is encouraged and rewarded as well. Muslim travelers throughout history have been seekers of knowledge, be it religious, scholarly, social, and/or cultural. They also believe that al-rihla is a means and a path to attain their goals of learning and expanding their knowledge in a myriad different ways. For Muslim travelers, al-rihla is a means to seeking knowledge as well as a path to God by the practice of Islamic orthodoxy.

Culture and cultural identity are significant components of Muslim travelers' self concept. Muslims have displayed differing levels of self-concept and presentation as cultural agents during the Medieval Islamic era and in our current time; ranging from pride in one's own religion and culture, in the Medieval Muslim civilization, to caution, fear, and hesitation of acknowledging it, in our modern/postmodern time.

Political power has a great impact on the educational spaces and experiences of Muslim travelers. Cross-cultural communication and interaction as a social practice has been strongly influenced by political power and the resulting issues of positionality of the address and response. Consequently, social spaces of difference have been

influenced and “informed by historical conjunctures of power and of social and cultural differences” (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 38).

Travel in/out of the Muslim World is a dual role factor that, on the one hand, enhances one’s interaction and knowledge of his/her own culture (travel within the Muslim world), resulting in fewer cultural conflicts and cross-cultural encounters. But, on the other hand, deprives travelers of the opportunity to communicate with and learn about people from cultures and religions other than their own. However, in modern times, Muslim travelers in search of knowledge have had the scholarly and cultural benefit of conducting their al-rihla outside of the Muslim world in order to meet and interact with the Other.

Advanced transportation and technology has expanded the opportunities to meet, communicate, interact, and learn about the Other in a more rapid manner. But, it also deprives people of the opportunity to invest more in human relationships, as the focus of the “time” concept has become centered on material goods, as in “Time is Money”, rather than human connections. On the other hand, advanced technology has decreased the need for thick and detailed descriptions of geographical locations around the world. Nowadays, people can navigate the world virtually on the internet, for example, and move from one country/place to another within a few moments. The visual technology in virtual worlds such as Second Life, provide incredible opportunities for virtual communication. Accordingly, educational spaces and experiences will expand and change, providing the needed/expected experiences through the virtual experience.

Recorded travel accounts and auto-biographic/ethnographic experiences have conclusively been shown to be effective tools, methods, and approaches for self-understanding/exploring. Authentic personal records and auto-biographic/ethnographic accounts of Muslim travelers' al-rihla have been proved to be significant methods in approaching Self and Self-Other interactions, especially in cultural contexts. If we revisit and/or examine authentic auto-biographic/ethnographic accounts with good intentions, open-mindedness, and a scholarly point of view, Muslim travelers' accounts will reveal significant patterns and/or factors that, if approached collaboratively and cooperatively by both sides - IMGS and their hosting community/universities and administrators/educators and social workers - will definitely decrease spaces of misunderstanding and/or misinterpretation of cross-cultural experiences. Thus, we can lessen IMGS' cautions and fears, and, instead, promote a positive cultural-exchange experience.

Research Question Four

How does the data analysis of narratives in the researcher's auto-ethnographic account and interviews with International Muslim Graduate Students inform and advance curriculum theory, cultural studies, postcolonial theory, and Islamic studies?

This dissertation enriches our understanding of curriculum theory in that it promotes a better understanding of IMGS' experiences in many forms; such as public pedagogy, theology, and autobiography/curre.

Public Pedagogy

Public pedagogy is a term introduced by Henry Giroux that refers to the, “production, dissemination, and circulation of ideas emerge from the educational force of the larger culture” (Giroux, 2005, p. 6). Public pedagogy focuses on informal education in public spaces that extends beyond traditional schooling; such as museums, public libraries, parks, and the Internet. Giroux argues that, “public pedagogy ... bridge the gap between private and public discourses, while simultaneously putting into play particular ideologies and values that resonate with broader public conversations regarding how society views itself and the world of power, events, and politics” (Giroux, 2005, p. 167).

Institutions of higher education in the U.S. offer unique public spaces apart from traditional classrooms. Those institutions are enriched by their varied student bodies, which include international students with their diverse cultures that allow unlimited opportunities to teach and learn about the Other in various ways; such as student gatherings, outdoor activities, and informal presentations. International students can introduce different aspects of their cultures through music, short skits, poetry and literature readings, cuisines, clothing, etc. Culture, according to Giroux (2004) may be defined as “a circuit of power, ideologies, and values in which diverse images and sounds are produced and circulated, identities are constructed, and discarded ... and discourses are created” (p. 60). Though there is controversy about the role which academics “might play in utilizing the university ... as a crucial public sphere” (Giroux, 2000, p. 343), those institutes represent unique educational public spaces that expand

education beyond the normal classroom curriculum and practice. Giroux (1991)

emphasized this debate, not only because it,

“makes visible the role that schools [higher education institutes] play as sites of political and cultural contestation, but also because it is within this debate that the notion of the United States as an open and democratic society is being both questioned and redefined” (p. 502).

Public pedagogy in institutions of higher education, then, can be viewed as, “sites of cultural realms as the one wherein subjectivities are continuously shaped and desires are cultivated in a process which is pedagogical” (Giroux, as cited in Mayo, 2002, p. 502).

Public spaces, Greene (1982) argued, are defined “by principles that enable diverse human beings to act in common and to be recognized for what they do” (Greene, 1982, p. 6). In this sense, cultural spaces in institutes of higher education represent educational spaces where “learning takes place across a spectrum of social practices and settings” (Giroux, 2004, p. 61). It is through those spaces that “new” meanings are produced, constructed, and/or reconstructed if pedagogy is understood as “performative practice embodied in the lived interactions among educators, audiences, texts, and institutional formations” (Giroux, 2004, p. 61).

Autobiography/Auto-ethnography and Currere

Maxine Greene in her essay, *The Dialectic of Freedom*, points out the “necessity of granting audibility to numerous voices and perspectives in order to create our identities within a plurality” (Miller, 2010, p. 136). Greene focused on the struggles of minority groups, women, immigrants, and newcomers. This researcher’s autobiography/auto-ethnographic account presents and examines struggles that result from cultural differences, which allows for self-reflexivity leading to a better

understanding of the Self, as well as the Self in relation to the Other. Those experiences are reflected in the Self, “located in a historical time and cultural place” (Pinar, 2004, p. 36).

Auto-ethnographic analysis of cultural experiences informs as well as challenges teachers and educators to become “self-conscious about political, historical, personal, social, and cultural influences on constructions of teacher roles and identities as well as conceptions of curriculum” (Miller, 2010, p. 136). Such a cultural analysis allows for a thorough examination of life experiences that enables educators to view curriculum not as “objective existent, external to the knower - there to be discovered, mastered, and learned” (Greene, as cited in Miller, 2010, p. 128) but, rather, in relation to their everyday life experiences as well as in relation to the Other.

For Pinar (2004), autobiography is a “first person and singular version of culture and history as these are embodied in the concretely existing individual in society in historical time” (p. 38). Pinar (2004) devised the method of *currere* “to study the relations between academic knowledge and life history in the interest of self-understanding and social construction” (p. 35). He defined *currere* as a process of self-reflexivity consisting of four stages; first, is the regressive moment of stepping back into past life experiences where “one returns to the past, to capture it as it was, and as it hovers over the present” (p. 36). The second is the progressive moment in which “one looks toward what is not yet the case” (p. 36), and the third is the synthetic moment in which both the past and present are examined. Finally, the fourth is the synthetic moment as “one of intense interiority” (p. 36). Carefully examined and analyzed

autobiographic accounts result in “complicated conversations with oneself (as an individual intellectual), an ongoing project of self-understanding in which one becomes mobilized for engaged pedagogical action” (p. 37) that informs and advances curriculum theory.

Theology

Islam is not only a religion but also a culture that shapes Muslim identity through everyday life teachings and practices, “there are many people whose religious identity is a cultural imperative” (Slattery, 2006, p. 71). The analyses of the researcher’s auto-ethnographic account and the IMGS’ interviews indicated that being a Muslim is an essential component of Muslims’ cultural identity that can be better understood within and through their cultural context and practice.

It is very important that Moderate Muslims emphasize different verses in the Qur’an and hadith that address the relationships between Muslims and the people of the Book, Christians and Jews and others, and their peaceful co-existence,

“Verily, those who believe (in Allah and in His Messenger Muhammad), and those who are Jews, and the Sabians, and the Christians, and the Majus, and those who worship others besides Allah, truly, Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection. Verily, Allah is over all things a Witness” (Qur’an 17: 17).

Those verses can be re-visited, addressed, and emphasized from a moderate Muslims’ point of view.

Postcolonial Studies

Postcolonial studies are concerned not only with a study of the history, literature, and politics of countries that were colonized but also with the culture and cultural

identity of both the colonized and colonizers. The colonizer's influence extends beyond the physical and/or military occupation of the colonized land to their influence on the minds and cultures of the "natives". In *Postcolonial Theory*, Gandhi (1993) discussed Nandy's distinction between two types of colonialism, "the first ... simple minded in its focus on the physical conquest of territories, whereas the second was more insidious in its commitment to the conquest and occupation of minds, selves, cultures" (p. 15). Consequently, colonization does not end on a fixed day and time, that of declaration of independence by the colonized countries, but continues into the future affecting future generations. Therefore, postcolonial studies should encompass both the periods of colonization as well as the era that follows.

The analysis of the researcher's account and the IMGS' data provided insights into the cultural experiences of the IMGS-body, a minority and marginalized group of Muslims in the U.S. after 9/11. IMGS perceived that they were only allowed a very limited and sometimes "un-safe" space to negotiate their culture. Considerations of cultural differences and cultural identity may advance our understanding of the Self and the Other as "identity of self or of other is a much worked-over historical, social, intellectual, and political process that takes place as a contest involving individual and institutions in all societies" (Said, 1978, p. 332).

Cultural Studies

The field of cultural studies is concerned with society, culture, and cultural interaction, "cultural studies, wherever it exists, reflects the rapidly shifting ground of thought and knowledge, argument and debate about a society and about its own culture"

(Hall, as cited in Giroux & McLaren, 1994, p. 1). In American society and, more specifically, its institutes of higher education the body of international students in attendance is increasing in size and scope. Such growth creates cultural spaces to negotiate a better understanding of international cultures and cultural identities.

The analysis of the researcher's account and the IMGS' data informs about cultural "spaces of in-between" that should be scrutinized and carefully examined. Institutes of higher education are public/cultural spaces that can be considered as spaces of "negotiation rather than negation" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37) where cultures negotiate their differences and celebrate their similarities. In doing so, new meanings will be produced as, according to Bhabha (1994), "these two places [spaces] be mobilized in the passage through a Third Space" (p. 53) to become a space that "carries the burden of the meaning of culture" (p. 53). It is in this "Third Space" that cultural translation and negotiation takes place, and, thus, allows for better understanding between different cultures.

Islamic Studies

The data analysis of the researcher's auto-ethnographic account and the IMGS' interviews highlights several aspects of Muslim's travels; such as the significance of religious beliefs in search of knowledge as a unifying theme for Muslims belonging to different sects of Islam, and the search for knowledge as a means and path to worldly and spiritual rewards. Those aspects indicate that Islam is not only a religion but also a culture influenced by internal and external factors.

Muslim scholars in the field of Islamic studies should examine and address these aforementioned aspects of Islamic culture in different Muslim countries that signify a mutual impact of culture and religion. And, as a result, the understanding of Muslims in the post-9/11 U.S. and their cultural experiences would be enhanced to promote a better accord between both cultures.

Additional Conclusions

The researcher stated her working hypothesis at the beginning of this study. As the study proceeded, hypotheses were developed that lead to the following conclusions:

- Most of the IMGS were very cautious about taking any responsibility for or playing any role in advancing a better understanding of their religion and culture, because of the critical situation of Muslims in the U.S. after 9/11. The conclusion of research question two emphasized that the communication and interaction of IMGS with their American counterparts/ or hosting community is governed by caution and fear of taking the initiative. The political situation of Muslims in the U.S., in general, and IMGS, in particular, has a great impact on the cultural interaction of Americans and IMGS and, thus, has increased the cultural gap between them. This situation has influenced IMGS' interest in taking responsibility for or playing an active role in international Muslim-American channels of communication.
- Most of the IMGS are more concerned with their personal goals, academic success and future careers, than playing the role of cultural agents for their countries and religion.

The discussion of research question two indicated that this hypothesis was incorrect, in that IMGS were interested in their role as cultural agents, but their communications and activities were governed by caution and fear of being misunderstood or misinterpreted by the Other. IMGS demonstrated their interest through their personal efforts to take the initiative and reach out to the Other, although their attempts were met with suspicion and disinterest from their hosting community. Cultural activities on campus were more related to either personal efforts to approach the Other or university-sponsored or administered activities. Accordingly, little space was allowed for IMGS to get more involved in cultural communication with the Other, which resulted in a greater focus and concern for their academic success and future careers.

- Most of the IMGS realized the significance of their role and would have liked to have done more, if their host community would have taken the initiative.

The conclusion of research question two emphasizes IMGS' understanding of their role and reflects their interest in bridging cultural gaps by reaching out to the Other, but it is also the responsibility of their university administration and hosting community to demonstrate more interest in communicating with the Other.

Though in naturalistic inquiry the rule of generalization is that, “there can be no generalization” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.124), working hypotheses are “tentative both for the situation in which they are first uncovered and for other situations” (p. 124). Thus,

the working hypotheses of this study also constituted some of the findings of this research study.

Implications

This study is not only a pioneering study of IMGS at this southwestern university but also of the role that IMGS can play as “agents of peace” between the Muslim World and American citizens. Previous studies, as discussed in the literature review, have focused on IMGS’ adjustment to U.S. culture by exploring issues, such as socialization, cross-cultural communication, visa and immigration problems, factors that influence IMGS academic achievements, language problems, and other problems/obstacles. However, this study is the first research study to examine IMGS’ role as intellectual Muslim scholars capable of playing an effective and constructive role in creating a better understanding between the Muslim World and U.S. citizens, in a cultural context. Consequently, this study has several implications on different cultural and academic levels.

Implications of the Results of This Study

The study results reveal that IMGS are a marginalized group of intellectual Muslims who have the potential and interest to bridge cultural gaps with their hosting community. Due to the environment for Muslims’s in the U.S. after 9/11, and the resulting caution in communication between them and their hosting community, IMGS rely on individual efforts at a personal level to reach out to their American counterparts, but only if they are encouraged and empowered by their relative institutions. Thus, it is the responsibility of institutes of higher education to encourage and empower their

IMGS to reach out to their American counterparts. Those institutions may provide great opportunities to promote more awareness of the Other and support IMGS in their efforts to enhance a better understanding and more appreciation of the Other, who is, in this case, a Muslim.

In the current situation that is governed by caution and fear of being a Muslim, as shown in this study, IMGS, unfortunately, have only very limited opportunities to bridge cultural gaps during their al-rihla in seeking knowledge in the U.S. However, the following implications of this study may help advance the IMGS' role as Muslim intellectuals and cultural agents for "peace" in their institutions of higher education in the U.S. It is very important that IMGS and the universities they attend work together to promote these programs and activities.

Implications for International Student Programs

The international students program in American universities is a lively department that confronts a variety of issues related to international students enrolled in their study programs in the U.S. In addition, those departments and offices sponsor and/or administer different activities both on and off campus that introduce American culture to international students from all over the world. Administrators and directors of these programs also arrange some activities for international students to present their culture in its different aspects. However, these activities are usually very limited in size and scope, conducted only once or twice a year, and focused on national culture. Though these activities provide a safe environment for IMGS, Americans and other international students to interact in, they may, in fact, hardly touch the surface regarding the culture

and do not allow for in-depth interaction between IMGS and their hosting community.

As the results of this study showed, the lack of interaction between IMGS and their hosting community is due to factors, such as caution and fear, and inadequate initiative on the part of the hosting community; therefore, it is very important that the international students program enhance IMGS-American student in-depth interactions through carefully selected and designed activities, rather than solely depending on activities such as dancing and food tasting. IMGS need more spaces for interaction, empowerment and encouragement from their ISP administrators, and better opportunities for constructive dialogues with the Other. For example, panels and discussion sessions could be held on different occasions to address a variety of misunderstandings about Islam and Muslims, and answer the questions of students from both sides.

Implications for Multicultural Programs

Multicultural programs provide an important medium to address cultures, cultural differences, and difficulties in cross-cultural communication between different cultural/ethnic groups. In order to promote a better understanding of Muslims and Islam, a carefully designed and conducted program that include seminars, presentations, and face-to-face discussions with IMGS will be very helpful in bridging cultural gaps and unravel a lot of misconceptions about Islam and Muslims. However, it is essential that those programs and/or activities be informed by IMGS themselves based on their personal experiences and the difficulties they faced/face in their interactions in the new culture.

Based on the researcher's personal experience in this regard, and due to collaborative efforts between her and several different programs, departments, and individuals, she conducted more than twenty presentations about her country, culture, Islam and Muslim women. The results were very encouraging in that the audience expressed their gratitude for having such opportunities to hear about Islam and Muslims from Muslims themselves, rather than from the media. Such events should be carried out on a regular basis and not only for students, but also for administrators and program coordinators.

Implications for Classroom Practices

The results of this study also show that the distance between IMGS and American students, in general, is large. Classroom professors and instructors may, therefore, choose to include different activities in their course material and invite IMGS to their classrooms to present, discuss, and answer American students' questions about Islam, Muslims, and related cultural practices. By doing so, both American students and IMGS will benefit from these classroom meetings.

Implications for International Muslim Graduate Students/ (Muslim Students Association)

In order to improve IMGS-American relationships, IMGS must approach their hosting community and take the first step to reach out to the Other. One of these approaches may be through the establishment of an IMGS association that works jointly with different universities' programs and departments and selects its topics based on the personal experiences of the IMGS during their academic enrollment. Carefully selected,

designed, approached, and addressed topics may be presented through a variety of events, and activities that reflect in-depth cultural differences and obstacles that face both IMGS and their American counterparts. Such an approach will definitely lessen the IMGS cautions and fears of addressing issues related to Islam and Muslims as well as encourage American students to ask and find answers to the questions they have. This will better address the bridging of cultural gaps.

Recommendations for Future Studies

It is time to establish research studies that examine the role that IMGS may play as effective cultural agents of peace in the U.S., and the factors that may hinder their taking on such a role. One of the most important problems that the researcher faced in this study was recruiting IMGS as participants. This problem occurred in both interview recruitment and in an anonymous online survey that the researcher posted during the preliminary stage of this study. Flyers for both the interview and the online survey were posted for three months. The researcher was fortunate to have seven IMGS participants in the study, but unfortunate in having only nine surveys completed. As a result, the researcher had to cancel the online survey part of this study.

Further research studies might answer the following questions:

1. What factors influence IMGS' participation in research studies that investigate cultural problems that IMGS face in their hosting community? What role do international, multicultural, and diversity offices and programs play in creating a safer environment and more welcoming atmosphere for IMGS?

2. What are the experiences of IMGS in other universities in the southern U.S.? How do these experiences compare to those of IMGS at Texas A&M University?
3. What are the experiences of IMGS in universities in the northern, eastern, and western sections and other parts of the U.S.? How do these experiences compare to those of IMGS in universities in the southern U.S.? What influence do “places” have on IMGS-American communication and social interaction?
4. How are the IMGS’ experiences influenced by gender? How are the female IMGS’ experiences influenced by their wearing of the Muslim hair cover, the hijab? Why is this so?
5. Do IMGS’ experiences vary from one country to another? What factors influence such variation? To what extent does the political relationship between the U.S. and different Muslim countries influence IMGS’ experiences in the U.S. during their study program?

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APPENDIX A**REQUEST WAIVER-CONSENT OR DOCUMENTATION OF CONSENT****Texas A&M University****Protocol for Human Subjects in Research**

**Project Title: Al-Rehla (Travel to Search knowledge) as a Curriculum to
Appreciation of Diversity and Multiculturalism in Islam: A Comparative Study
between Medieval Muslim Travelers and International Muslim Students (IMS)**

Waiver of Consent

I certify that my research study meets “all four” of the following criteria:

- ☐ **45 CFR 46.116**
- 1- The research involves no more than minimal risk to the participants;
 - 2- The waiver of alteration will not adversely affect the rights and welfare of the participants;
 - 3- The research could not practicably be carried out without the waiver or alteration; and
 - 4- Whenever appropriate, the participants will be provided with additional pertinent information after participation.

OR**Waiver of Signed Consent**

I certify that my research study meets “at least one” of the following criteria:

☐ **45 CFR 46.117**

- 1- The only record linking the participants and the research would be the consent document, and the principal risk would be potential harm resulting from a breach of confidentiality. Each participant will be asked whether the participant wants documentation linking the participant with the research, and the participant’s wish will govern; or
- 2- The research presents no more than minimal risk of harm to participants and involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context. In cases in which the documentation requires is waived, the IRB may require the investigator to provide participants with the written statement regarding the research.

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: 2/7/2008

Typed/Printed Name: Methal Mohammed
waiver of consent form

version: 011/28/2010

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

Al-rehla (Travel to Search Knowledge) as a Curriculum to Appreciation of Diversity and Multiculturalism in Islam: A Comparative Study Between Medieval Muslim Travelers Experience and International Muslim Students (IMS)

Introduction

The purpose of this form is to provide you information that may affect your decision as to whether or not to participate in this research study. If you decide to participate in this study, this form will also be used to record your consent.

You have been asked to participate in a research project studying the experiences of Al-rehla of international Muslim graduate students in search of knowledge. The purpose of this study is to gain an understanding of your communication and interaction with your hosting community on campus. You were selected to this study because you are IMGS who have been on their graduate program at Texas A&M University between 1-3 years.

What will I be asked to do?

If you agree to participate in this study, you will be interviewed and asked to answer questions about your understanding of al-rehla, knowledge in Islam, al-rehla in seeking knowledge in Islam, your experience of communication and interaction with your hosting community on campus, activities you participated in to bring better understanding between your culture and American culture, and any suggestion you have to enhance cultural exchange between IMGS and their hosting community. Your participation may be audio recorded. If there is any portion of the interview you do not want be recorded, you may say so.

What are the risks involved in this study?

The risks associated in this study are minimal, and are not greater than risks ordinarily encountered in daily life.

What are the possible benefits of this study?

You will receive no direct benefit from participating in this study; however, the study may lead to better understanding of IMGS' experiences of al-rehla.

Do I have to participate?

No. Your participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate or to withdraw at any time without your current or future relations with Texas A&M University being affected.

Will I be compensated?

You will not receive compensation, class points or credit for your participation.

Who will know about my participation in this research study?

This study is confidential. The records of this study will be erased immediately after being transcribed. No identifiers linking you to this study will be included in any sort of report that might be published. Research records will be stored securely and only Methal R. Mohammed will have access to the records. If you choose to participate in this study, you may be audio recorded. Any audio recordings will be stored securely and only Methal R. Mohammed will have access to the recordings. Any recordings will be destroyed immediately after being transcribed.

Whom do I contact with questions about the research?

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Methal R. Mohammed at Texas A&M University, (979) 204-8494 or mmarzouk@tamu.edu

Whom do I contact about my rights as a research participant?

This research study has been reviewed by the Human Subjects' Protection Program and/or the Institutional Review Board at Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you can contact TAMU offices at (979) 458-4067 or irb@tamu.edu

Signature

Please be sure you have read the above information, asked questions and received answers to your satisfaction. You will be given a copy of the consent form for your records. By signing this document, you consent to participate in this study.

_____ I agree to be audio recorded.

_____ I do not want to be audio recorded.

Signature of Participant: _____ **Date:**

Printed Name:

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent: _____ **Date:**

Printed Name:

APPENDIX C

Interview Guide

By Methal R. Mohammed

Semi-structured Questions guided the interview:

1. How long have you been a student at Texas A&M University?
2. What is your concept of *al-rihla* (travel for seeking knowledge) in Islam?
3. What is your concept of *hajj* in Islam? (holy pilgrimage to Mecca)
4. What relationship do you see between these two concepts in terms of building cultural awareness?
5. What major cultural difficulties have you encountered while communicating with Americans or being immersed within American culture?
6. Prior to coming to the United States, how familiar were you with American culture?
7. What have you learned about American culture so far? Please provide at least one example.

8. Prior to your interactions with Americans, how familiar do you think they were with your culture? How do you know?
9. Through your interactions with Americans, how much do you think they have learned about your culture? How do you know?
10. Other than your research and school work as a student, what opportunities or activities have you been engaged in to introduce your culture to Americans? (i.e., presentations, University Open House activities, sporting events, cultural festivals)
11. What response did you get from the Americans with whom you interacted in these activities?
12. What activities do you think would help open new doors for Americans to gain a better understanding of and appreciation for your culture?
13. How likely you are to participate in university sponsored activities that would introduce your culture to Americans? (i.e., International Student Services (ISS), Sponsored Students Programs (SSP), Multicultural Study Programs, other sponsored international cultural activities)

14. Based on your personal experiences, what suggestions do you have that might help Americans gain a better understanding of your culture?

APPENDIX D**IRB- Approval Form****TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
DIVISION OF RESEARCH AND GRADUATE STUDIES - OFFICE OF RESEARCH COMPLIANCE**

1186 TAMU
College Station, TX 77843-
1186
1500 Research Parkway,
Suite B-150

979.458.1467
FAX 979.862.3176
<http://researchcompliance.tamu.edu>

Institutional Biosafety Committee Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee Institutional Review Board

DATE: 20-Feb-2008

MEMORANDUM

TO: MOHAMMED, METHAL
77843-3578

FROM: Office of Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board

SUBJECT: Initial Review

**Protocol
Number:** 2008-0094

Title: Al-rehla (Travel to Search Knowledge) as a Curriculum to Appreciation of
Diversity and Multiculturalism in Islam: A Comparative Study Between
Medieval Muslim Travelers Experience and International Muslim Students
(IMS)

**Review
Category:** Expedited

**Approval
Period:** 20-Feb-2008 To 19-Feb-2009

Approval determination was based on the following Code of Federal Regulations:

(7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not

limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation or quality assurance methodologies.

(Note: Some research in this category may be exempt from the HHS regulations for the protection of human subjects. 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) and (b) (3). This listing refers only to research that is not exempt.)

VITA

Methal R. Mohammed earned two bachelor degrees, B.S. in chemistry and B. A. in English language, from Baghdad University. As a Fulbright scholar, she earned her M. Ed. in curriculum and instruction with focus on English as Second Language from Texas A&M University in May 2007. She earned her doctor of Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction with focus on culture and curriculum from Texas A&M University in May 2011. She taught chemistry at the College of Medicine, and English as a Second Language, as a university teacher, at Baghdad University. She worked as a teaching/research assistant in the Department of Teaching, Learning and Culture at Texas A&M University. She co-taught and assisted in teaching on both graduate and undergraduate levels, and assisted in educational research projects. Methal also taught Arabic at Texas A&M University.

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